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Paul Willard Jr

[by George Payne Ramsford James]

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Paul Willard Jr





[George Payne Rainsford James.]

K  
**THE ROBBER.**

**A TALE.**

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"RICHELIEU," "THE GIPSY," "ATTILA," &c., &c.

"More should I question thee, and more I must,  
Though more to know would not be more to trust,  
From whence thou camest, how tended on. But rest  
Unquestioned, welcome; and undoubted, blest!"

**IN TWO VOLUMES.**

**VOL. I.**

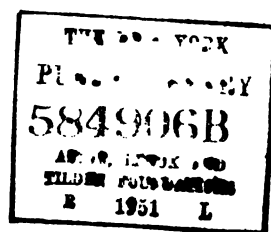
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**1838:**

*m. sm.*





TO  
WILLIAM JAMES ATKINSON, ESQ.,

AND TO

THE MEMORY OF MANY PLEASANT HOURS SPENT  
IN HIS SOCIETY,

WHERE

LEARNING, CHEERFULNESS, AND BENEVOLENCE LEFT NOTHING TO BE REGRETTED BUT THE FLIGHT OF TIME,

THIS BOOK  
IS DEDICATED, BY HIS FRIEND

THE AUTHOR.

*W. J. Atkinson*  
*1851, 20.*

1861-1862

# THE ROBBER.

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## CHAPTER I.

It was in the olden time of *merry England*. Not at that far-removed period when our native land first received its jocund name from the bowmen of Sherwood, and when the yeoman or the franklin, who had wandered after some knightly banner to the plains of the Holy Land, looked back upon the little island of his birth with forgetfulness of all but its cheerful hearths and happy days. Oh, no! it was in a far later age, when, notwithstanding wars and civil contentions not long past by, our country still deserved the name of merry England, and received it constantly among a class peculiarly its own. That class was the "good old country gentleman," an antediluvian animal swallowed up and exterminated by the deluge of modern improvements, and whose very bones are now being ground to dust by railroads and steamcarriages. Nevertheless, in that being there was much to wonder at and much to admire; and the inimitable song which commemorates its existence does not more than justice to the extinct race. It was in the days of Walton and Cotton, then, or somewhere thereabout (for it is unnecessary in a tale purely domestic to fix the date to a year), that the events which we are about to narrate took place, and the scene is entirely in *merry England*.

The court and the country were at that period—with the present we have nothing to do—two completely distinct and separate climates; and while the wits and the libertines, the fops and the soldiers, the poets and the philosophers, of the reigns of Charles, James, William, and Anne, formed a world in which debauchery, vice, strife, evil passion, rage, jealousy, and hatred seemed the only occupations of genius, and the true

sphere for talent; while Oxford and Cambridge had their contentions, and vied with the capital in nourishing feuds and follies of their own, there was a calm and quiet world apart, amid the shady brooks, and sunny fields, and dancing streams of merry England; a world which knew but little of the existence of the other, except when the vices, or follies, or crimes of the world of the court called upon the world of the country to resist the encroachments of its neighbour, and defend its own quiet prosperity.

From the peasant who tilled the glebe, and whistled to outsing the lark over his happy toil, up to the lord of the manor, the knight whose many ancestors had all been knights before him, the countrymen of England mingled hardly, if at all, with the world of the metropolis and of the court; except, indeed, when some aspiring spirit, filled with good viands and a fair conceit, raised his wishes to be knight of the shire, and sit in parliament among the more courtly of the land; or else when some borough sent its representative to the senate to bring down strange tales of London life and fresh fashions for the wives and daughters.

There was, indeed, a connecting link between the two states of being we have described, afforded by the old hereditary nobility of the land; many members of which still lingered by the ancestral hall, as yet unalured from the calm delights of rural life, and the dignified satisfaction of *dwelling among their own people*, even by all the amusements or luxuries of the capital. An annual visit to London, an appearance in the court of the sovereign and the House of Peers at certain times, varied the existence of this class of men; and neither liking, comprehending, nor esteeming the wits and foppings of the metropolis, they returned well pleased to hold their ancient state in the country, bearing renewed importance among the county gentlemen around from this fresh visit to the fountain of all honours and distinctions.

Great, indeed, was their importance among their neighbours at all times; far greater than we in the present day can well picture to ourselves; for, independent of the consequence acquired by spending large incomes within a limited sphere, the feeling of feudal influence was not extinct, though the fact had become a nonentity; and the tenantry on a great man's estate looked

up to him in those days with the greater veneration and devotion because they were not compelled to do so. Above the tenantry again, the squire and the magistrate, who not only owed a great part of their comfort in the county, their consideration with their neighbours, and their estimation in their own eyes, to the degree of favour in which they stood with the earl, the marquis, or the duke, but who might at any time be rendered uncomfortable and persecuted, if not oppressed, in case they forfeited his good graces, failed not to show their reverence for him on every legitimate occasion; and sometimes, perhaps, went a little farther also.

Thus, of the little hierarchy of the county, there was generally some nobleman as the chief, and from him it descended through baronets, lords of the manor, knights, justices, squires, and many an *et cetera* down to the lowest class of all, who still looked up to that chief, and would tell the passer-by, with much solemn truth, that "the earl was quite a king in his own part of the world."

Among such classes, in such scenes, and at such a period, took place the events about to be described.

At the door of a small, neat country inn stood gazing forth a traveller one clear bright morning in the end of the month of May. The hour was early: the matutinal servants of the house were scarcely up; and Molly, with mop and pail, was busily washing out the passage which was soon to be thickly strewn with clean yellow sand. The scene before the traveller's eyes was one on which it is pleasant to dwell; the centre street of a small country town, many miles from a great city. There were a few light clouds in the sky, but they did not interrupt the rays of the great orb of light, who was yet low down in the heaven; and the shadows of the manifold white houses, with their peaked gables turned towards the street, fell more than half across the road, forming a fanciful pattern on the ground; the yellow sunshine and the blue shade lying clear and distinct, except where a little fountain burst forth half way down the town, and mingled the two together.

It was, as I have said, a cool and pleasant scene for the eye to rest upon; and even the casements of the houses opposite, shaded by the close-drawn white curtains, gave an idea of calm and happy repose. The

world within were all yet asleep; the toil, the anxiety, the care, the strife of active life had not yet began.

The eye of the traveller rested upon the picture apparently well pleased. It gazed contemplatively up the street to where the road had been made to take a turn, in order to avoid the brow of the gentle hill on which the town was built; and which, crowned with houses of pleasant irregularity, interrupted the farther view in that direction; and then that eye turned downward to the place where the highway opened out into the country beyond, after passing over a small bright stream by a brick bridge of ancient date. Over the bridge was slowly wending at the same moment a long line of cattle, lowing as they went forth to pasture, with a herd following in tuneful mood, and neither hurrying himself nor them. The stranger's eye rested on them for a single moment, but then roved on to the landscape which was spread out beyond the bridge, and on it he gazed as curiously as if he had been a painter.

On it, too, we must pause, for it has matter for our consideration. The centre of the picture presented a far view over a bright and smiling country, with large masses of woodland, sloping up in blue lines to some tall brown hills at the distance of ten or twelve miles. A gleaming peep of the river was caught in the foreground, with a sandy bank crowned with old trees; and above the trees again appeared the high slated roofs of a mansion, whose strong walls, formed of large flints cemented together, might also here and there be seen looking forth, gray and heavy, through the green, light foliage. Three or four casements, too, were apparent, but not enough of the house was visible to afford any sure indication of its extent, though the massiveness of the walls, the width of the spaces between the windows, the size of the roofs, and the multitude of the chimneys, instantly made one mentally call it *The Manor House*.

This mansion seemed to be at the distance of about a mile from the town; but upon a rising ground on the opposite side of the picture, seen above bridge and trees, and the first slopes of the offscap, appeared at the distance of seven or eight miles, or more, a large irregular mass of building, apparently constructed of gray stone, and in some places covered with ivy; at least, if one might so interpret the dark stains apparent even at that

distance upon various parts of its face. There was a deep wood behind it, from which it stood out conspicuously, as the morning sun poured clear upon it; and in front appeared what might either be a deer park filled with stunted hawthorn and low chestnut trees, or a wide common.

Such was the scene on which the traveller gazed, as, standing in front of the deep double-seated porch of the little inn, he looked down the road to the country beyond. There was no moving object before his eyes but the herd passing over the bridge; there was no sound but the lowing of the cattle, the whistling of their driver, and a bright lark singing far up in the blue sky.

It is time, however, to turn to the traveller himself, who may not be unworthy of some slight attention. Certain it is that the good girl, who was now sprinkling the passage and porch behind him with fine sand, thought that he was worthy of such; for though she had seen him before, and knew his person well, yet ever and anon she raised her eyes to gaze over his figure, and vowed, we believe, in her heart, that he was as good-looking a youth as ever she had set eyes on.

His age might be five or six-and-twenty, and his height, perhaps, five feet eleven inches. He was both broad and deep-chested, that combination which ensures the greatest portion of strength, with length and ease of breath; and though his arms were not such as would have called attention from their robustness, yet they were evidently muscular and finely proportioned. Thin in the flanks, and with the characteristic English hollow of the back, his lower limbs were remarkably powerful, ending, however, in a small, well-shaped foot and ankle, set off to good advantage in the neat, close-fitting shoe.

His countenance was as handsome as his figure, and remarkably prepossessing; the features slightly aquiline; the colouring a rich brown, though the eyes were found to be decidedly blue when fully seen through the black lashes. His hair, waving round his face and curling upon his neck, was of a deep glossy brown, and the fine-shaped lips, which, in their natural position, were slightly open, showed beneath a row of even teeth as white as snow. The brow was broad, straight, and high, with the eyebrow, that most expressive of all the features, forming a wavy line of beauty, strongly marked



upon the clear skin, and growing somewhat thicker and deeper above the inner canthus of the eye. Between the eyebrows, however, appeared the only thing that the most fastidious critic of beauty could have objected to. It was a deep scar, evidently the mark of a severe cut, whether received by accident in the jocund days of boyhood, or in the manly sports of the country, or in the field of battle, might be doubtful; but there it rested for ever, a clear, long scar, beginning half way up the forehead, and growing deeper as it descended, till it formed a sort of indentation between the eyebrows, similar to that produced in some countenances by a heavy frown. Thus to look at the brow, one would have said the face was stern; to look at the eyes, one might have pronounced it thoughtful; but the bland, good-humoured, cheerful smile upon the lips contradicted both, and spoke of a heart which fain would have been at ease, whose own qualities were all bright, and warm, and gay, if the cares and strifes of the world would but let them have way.

We shall not pause long upon the stranger's dress. It was principally composed of what was then called brown kersey, a coarse sort of stuff used by the common people; but the buttons were of polished jet; the linen remarkably fine; the hat, with its single straight feather, set on with an air of smartness; while the fishing-basket under the arm, and the rod in the hand, and all the rest of an angler's paraphernalia conspicuous upon the person, reconciled the homely dress with the distinguished appearance. He was evidently boon for the banks of the clear stream; and yet, though it was the hour of all others which a fisherman should have cultivated, he lingered for some minutes at the door of the little inn, gazing, as we have depicted him, alternately up and down the street, with a slow, meditative look, as if enjoying the beauty of the morning and the fair scene around him. It is true that his eyes turned most frequently and rested longest upon the bridge, and stream, and old manor-house, with the wide country beyond; but still he occasionally looked to the other bend of the road, and once seemed to listen for some sound.

He had at length taken one step forward, as if to pursue his way, when the voice of the host of the Talbot, good Gregory Myrtle, was heard coming down the

stairs, talking all the way for the benefit of any one who might hear, with a fat, jovial, ale-burdened sound, which, at other times and seasons, rejoiced the hearts of many a "gay companion of the bowl." The first indication of his coming was a peal of laughter, a loud "Haw, haw, haw!" at some conjugal joke uttered by his dame as he left his chamber.

"Well said, wife! well said!" he exclaimed, "it is good to be fat; for, when I can no longer walk, I shall easily be rolled; haw, haw, haw! Gads my life! I must have these stairs propped, or else choose me a chamber on the ground-floor. Sand the floor well, Molly, sand the floor well! Think, were I to slip, what a squeelch would be there. Ha, Master Harry! ha!" he continued, seeing the stranger turn towards him; "how was it I saw you not last night when you arrived? You flinched the flagon, I fear me, Master Harry! Nay, good faith, that was not right to old Gregory Myrtle."

"I was tired, good Gregory!" replied the stranger: "I had ridden more than fifty miles to be here to-day, and I wished to rise early, for the sake of my speckled friends in the stream."

"Ale keeps no man from rising," cried the host. "See how it has made me rise, like a pat of dough in a baker's oven! haw, haw, haw!" and he patted his own fat round paunch. "But whence come ye, Master Harry? from the court, or the city, or the wars?"

"From neither, Myrtle," replied the stranger; "I come from a great distance, to take my tithe of the stream as usual. But how goes on the country since I left it?"

"Well! mighty well!" answered the landlord, "all just as it was, I think. No! poor old Milson, the sexton, is dead; he had buried four generations of us, and the fifth has buried him. He caught cold at the justice-room, giving evidence about that robbery, you remember, out upon the moor, and took to his bed and died."

"Which robbery do you mean?" demanded the other; "there were many going on about that time upon the moor and over the hill. Have there been any lately?"

"Not one since you left the country, Master Harry," replied the landlord.

"I hope you do not mean to hint that I had any hand in them," rejoined his companion, with a smile.

"God forbid!" exclaimed good Gregory Myrtle; "haw, haw, haw! That was a funny slip of mine! No, no, Master Harry, we know you too well; you are more likely to give away all your own than take a bit of other people's, God bless you."

"I think indeed I am," answered the young man, with a sigh; "but, if I talk with you much longer, I shall be too late to rob the stream of its trout. Don't forget, Myrtle, to send up to the manor for leave for me, as usual. I suppose his worship is awake by this time, or will be by the time my tackle is all ready;" and, so saying, he sauntered on down the street, took the pathway by the bridge, and, turning along the bank of the river, was soon lost to the sight.

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## CHAPTER II.

SOMETIMES in bright sunny expanse over a broad shallow bed of glittering stones and sand; sometimes in deep pools under high banks bending with shrubs and trees; sometimes winding through a green meadow; sometimes quick and fretful; sometimes slow and sulken, on flowed the little river on its course, like a moody and capricious man amid all the various accidents of life.

Beginning his preparations close to the bridge, upon a low grassy bank which ran out from the buttress, and afforded a passage round beneath the arches, the stranger, whom the landlord had called Master Harry, had not yet completed all the arrangement of his fishing-tackle, when one of those servants who, in that day, were as famous for a good-humoured idleness in the great hall, as their successors are for an insolent idleness in the present times, and were known by the familiar name of *blue-bottles*, made his appearance, carrying his goodly personage with a quick step towards the fisherman. The infinite truth generally to be found in old sayings was never more happily displayed than in the proverb, "Like master, like man!" and, if so, a pleasant augury of the master's disposition was to be derived from the demeanour of his messenger. As he came near he raised his hand, touched his cap respect-

fully, though the fisherman was dressed in kersey; and, with a grave complacent smile, wished him good-morning.

"Sir Walter gives you good-day, sir," he said, "and has told me to let you know that you are quite welcome to fish the stream from Abbot's Mill to Harland, which, God help us, is the whole length of the manor. He says he has heard of your being here these two years, and always asking leave and behaving consistent; and he is but too happy to give such a gentleman a day or two's pleasure. Let me help you with the rod, sir; it is somewhat stiffish."

The stranger expressed his thanks both to Sir Walter Herbert for his permission and to the servant for his assistance; and the *blue-bottle*, who had also a well-exercised taste for angling, stood and looked on and aided till all was ready. By this time the day had somewhat advanced, and the steps passing to and fro over the bridge and along the road had become more frequent; but they did not disturb the fisherman in his avocations; and as he prepared to ascend the stream, whipping it as he went with the light fly, the old servant turned to depart with one more "good-morning, sir;" adding, however, as he looked at a birding-piece which the stranger carried across his shoulder, and then glanced his eye to some red coots which were floating about upon the stream, as familiarly as if they had been small farmers of the water and held it under lease, "Perhaps, sir, you will be kind enough not to shoot the coots and divers; Sir Walter likes to see them on the river."

"I would as soon think of shooting myself, my good friend," replied the other: "I have heard that poor Lady Herbert was fond of them; and I would not repay Sir Walter's permission so ill."

The servant bowed and withdrew; and, as he passed on, took off his hat reverentially to an old gentleman and a young lady who were leaning over a low parapet-wall flanking a terrace in the gardens just opposite the bridge. The last words of the servant and the angler had been overheard, and the result we may soon have occasion to show.

We will not write a chapter upon angling. It matters little to the reader whether the stranger caught few or many fish, or whether the fish were large or small. Suffice it to say that he was an expert angler; that the

river was one of the best trout streams in England; that the day was favourable; and, if the stranger did not fill his basket with the speckled tenants of the stream, it proceeded from an evil habit of occasionally forgetting what he was about, and spending many minutes gazing alternately at the lordly mansion to be seen in the distance, and the old manor-house beyond the bridge. He came at length, however, to a spot where both were shut out by the deep banks overhead, and there he soon made up for lost time, though he still threw his line in thoughtful mood, and seemed all too careless whether the fish were caught or not.

It was their will, however, to be caught; but, at the end of four or five hours' fishing, he was interrupted again by the appearance of the same old servant, who now approached, bearing on his arm a basket evidently well laden.

"Sir Walter desired me to compliment you, sir," he said, "and to wish you good sport. He prays you, too, to honour him by supping with him, for he will not interrupt your fishing by asking you to dine. He has sent you, however, wherewithal to keep off hunger and thirst, and trusts you will find the viands good. Shall I spread them out for you?"

There is no sport in the world better calculated to promote the purposes of that pleasant enemy hunger, than throwing the long light line over the clear brook; and the angler, who, in the busy thoughts of other things, had left chance to provide him with a dinner, willingly availed himself of the good knight's hospitable supply, and did ample justice to all that the basket contained. But there was something more in his feelings on this occasion than the mere gratification of an appetite, though the satisfaction of our hunger has proved a magnificent theme in the hands of our greatest epic poets.

There were other feelings; and there must always be other feelings mingling with our animal impulses, in order to dignify and elevate the needs that unite us with the brute creation: there must be something which links the earthly portion to the unearthly, something that leads the thoughts from the mere act of the clay to things less coarse, to brighter and purer affections. In ancient days they wreathed the winecup with flowers, and strewed the festal board with blossoms. Sweet

sounds and grateful odours have in all times accompanied the banquet; but few of those who drank and feasted have known why; few have understood that the immortal mind craved occupation of a higher kind, while the body supplied its necessities. The brightest and the tenderest friend of our earthly being is that imagination which lends its splendid colouring to all we do, and which, like the beneficent hand of nature itself, clothes dust and ashes, and clouds and vapours, in beauty and brightness not their own.

There were other feelings in the breast of the angler as he sat down and partook of the viands provided for him, which rendered those viands grateful to the mind as well as to the body; and though the beauty of the scene around, the freshness and splendour of the bright spring day, the wooing of the soft air by the bank of the river, the music of the waters as they glided by him, and the carols of manifold birds in the neighbouring woods, were all accessories which might well render a meal tasted in the midst of them not only pleasant at the time, but memorable in after days; yet there was something more than all this which made the little basket of provisions thrice agreeable to him; something that made him believe he had been understood, as it were intuitively, by the only persons he would have stooped to seek in the neighbourhood, if he could have stooped to seek any one; something, perhaps, beyond that, which may or may not be rendered clear hereafter, as the reader's eye is obscure or penetrating into the secrets of the human heart and character. He received, then, the gift with gladness, and sat down to partake of it with something more than hunger. He accepted willingly, also, the invitation he had received to sup at the manor-house; and bestowing a piece of money on the serving man, which amply repaid the pains he had taken, he suffered him to depart, though not till he had lured him down the stream to see several trout brought out of the bright waters with as skilful a hand as ever held a rod.

The fisherman was still going on after the old servant had left him, when he was suddenly roused by a rustling in the high-wooded bank above; and the moment after he saw descending by a path, apparently not frequently used, a personage upon whose appearance we must dwell for a moment.

The gentleman on whose person the fisherman's eyes were immediately fixed was somewhere within the ill-defined limits of that vague period of human life called the middle age. None of his strength was gone, perhaps none of his activity; but yet the traces of time's wearing hand might be seen in the gray that was plentifully mingled with his black hair, and in the furrows which lay along his broad, strongly-marked brow. He was well dressed, according to the fashion of that day; and any one who has looked into the pictures of Sir Peter Lely must have seen many such a dress as he then wore without our taking the trouble of describing it.

That was a period of heavy swords and many weapons; but the gentleman who now approached bore nothing offensive upon his person but a light blade, which looked better calculated for show than use, and a small valuable cane hanging at his wrist. There was a certain degree of foppery, indeed, about his whole appearance, which accorded not very well with either his form or his features. He was about the same height as the angler whom we have before described, but much more broadly made, with a chest like a mountain bull, and long sinewy arms and legs, whose swelling muscles might be discerned, clear and defined, through the white stocking that appeared above his riding-boots. His face was quite in harmony with his person, square cut, with good, but somewhat stern features, large bright eyes flashing out from beneath a pair of heavy overhanging eyebrows, a well-shaped mouth, though somewhat too wide, and a straight nose, rather short, but not remarkably so.

The complexion was of a deep tanned brown; and there were many lines and furrows over the face, which indicated that the countenance there presented was a tablet on which passion often wrote with a fierce and fiery hand, leaving deep, uneffaceable traces behind. That countenance, indeed, was one calculated to bear strong expressions; and which, though changing rapidly under the influence of varied feelings, still became worn and channelled by each; by the storm and the tempest, the sunshine and the shower.

On the present occasion, the expression of his face was gay, smiling, and good-humoured; and as he approached the angler, he exclaimed, with a laugh, "You

have dined well, Master Harry; and, methinks, had you been generous, you might have saved me a nook of the pie or a draught out of the bottle."

"I did not know you were so near, Franklin," answered the angler, somewhat gravely; "I thought you would have met me at the Talbot this morning; and, not finding you, I fancied that you had forgotten your promise."

"I never forget a promise," replied the other, sharply, and with his brow beginning to lower; "I never forget a promise, Master Harry, be it for good or evil. Had I promised to blow your brains out, I would have done it; and, having promised to meet you here this morning, here I am."

"Do not talk such nonsense to me, Franklin, about blowing men's brains out," replied the angler, calmly; "such things do not do with me! I know you better, my good friend! But what prevented you from coming?"

"You do not know me better!" replied the other, sharply. "If I ever said I would blow your brains out—the which God forbid—by the rood I would do it; and as to what has kept me, I have been here since yesterday morning seeing what is to be done. I tell you, Master Harry, that the time is come; and that, if we lay our plans well, we may strike our great stroke within the next three days. I had my reasons, too, for not coming up to the Talbot; but you go back there, and hang about the country as if you had no thought but of fishing or fowling. Have your horses ready, fresh and well fed for action at a moment's notice, and I will find means to give you timely warning. You know my boy Jocelyn! When you see him about, be sure that there is something to be done; find means to give him a private hearing instantly, and have your arms and horses, as I have said, all prepared."

While the other was speaking, the angler had laid down his rod on the bank, and, crossing his arms upon his chest, had fixed his fine thoughtful eyes full calmly and steadfastly upon his companion. "Franklin," he said at length, "I trust you to a certain point in the conduct of this business, but no farther! I trust you because I believe you to be faithful, bold, active, and shrewd. But remember, there is a point where we must stop. What is it you propose to do? I am not



one to be led blindfold even by you, Gray; and I remember but too well that, when in other lands fortune cast our lots together, you were always bent upon some wild and violent enterprise, where the risk of your own life seemed to compensate in your eyes for the wrong you at times did to others. Forgive me, Gray, but I must speak plainly. You have promised, you have offered to do me a great service; the greatest, perhaps, that man could render me; but you have not told me how it is to be done; and there must be no violence."

"Not unless we are obliged to use it in our own defence," replied the other, sharply. "As to the rest, Master Harry, the enterprise is mine as well as yours: so do not make me angry, or you may chance to fail altogether, and find Franklin Gray as bad an enemy as he can be a good friend."

"No threats, Franklin," replied the other; "you should know that threats avail not with me. I thank you deeply for all your kindness, Franklin, but neither gratitude nor menaces can lead me blindfold. Years have passed since in the same high and noble cause, and under the same great, good man, we fought together on the banks of the Rhine; and you seem to have forgotten that even then, boy as I was, neither threats nor persuasions would move me to do anything I judged—though, perhaps, falsely—to be really wrong. A change has come over you, Gray, but no change has come over me. I am the same, and will remain the same."

"Did you not promise to leave the conduct of this to me?" cried his companion. "Did you not promise to submit to my guidance therein? But never mind! I give you back your promise. Break it all off! Let us part. Go, and be a beggar. Lose all your hopes, and leave me to follow my own course. I care not! But I will not peril my neck for any dastard scruples of yours."

"Dastard!" exclaimed the other, taking a step towards him, and half drawing his sword out of the sheath with the first impulse of indignation, while his brow contracted so as to cover entirely the deep scar between his eyes. "Dastard! such a word to me!"

"Ay, to you, or any one," replied Franklin Gray, laying his hand upon the hilt of his sword also, as if about to draw it instantly, while his dark eye flashed and his lip quivered under the effects of strong passion.

The next impulse, however, was to gaze for a moment in the countenance of his young opponent ; the expression of anger passed away ; and, withdrawing his hand from the hilt, he threw his arms round the other, exclaiming, "No, no, Harry ! We must not quarrel ! We must not part ! at least not till I have fulfilled all I promised. I have nursed you as a baby on my knee ; I have stood beside you when the bullets were flying round our heads like hail ; I have lain with you in the same prison ; and for your own sake, as well as for those that are gone, I will serve you to the last ; but you must not forget your promise either. Leave the conduct of this matter to me, and, on my soul, I will use no violence, I will shed no blood, except in our own defence ! Even then they shall drive me to the last before I pull a trigger."

"Well, well," replied the other, "I will trust you, Franklin, though I have had many a doubt and hesitation lately."

"Did you not promise your mother on her deathbed," demanded the other, straining both his companion's hands in his ; "did you not solemnly swear to her to follow my suggestions, to put yourself under my guidance till the enterprise was achieved ?"

"I did, I did !" replied the angler. "I did ; but then you promised, freely and frankly, to accomplish the object that was at that moment dearest to her heart ; and I had no doubt, I had no fear as to the means. I certainly did so promise my poor mother ; but, when she exacted that promise, you and I were both differently situated ; and I fear me, Franklin, I fear me that you are overfond of strife ; that you are following paths full of danger to yourself ; and that you will not be contented till you have brought evil on your own head."

"Pshaw," replied his companion, turning away. "That is my affair ; I will leave the more maudlin part of the business to you ; let me have the strife, if there should be any ; but remember your promise, Harry, and let this be the last time that we have such fruitless words."

The other made no reply ; and Franklin, after gazing on him moodily for a moment, cast himself down upon the bank, and asked, "How do you bestow yourself to-night ?"

"I am invited to sup at the manor-house with Sir Walter Herbert," replied the angler; "and I shall go."

"Go, to be sure!" exclaimed his companion; "it may serve us more than anything. Have you ever seen Sir Walter?"

"At a distance," replied the other; "but I never spoke to him. I know him well, however, by repute. They tell me he has fallen into some difficulties."

"From which, perhaps, you may help him," said Franklin, thoughtfully.

"Perhaps I may," answered the angler, in the same tone; "perhaps I may if I can discover how it may best be done; but, at present, I only know that difficulties exist, without knowing why or how; for the estates are princely. However, if within my reach, I will try to aid him, whether fortune ever turns round and smiles upon me or not; for I hear he is as noble a gentleman as ever lived."

"Ay, and has a fair daughter," answered his companion, with a smile. "You have seen her, I suppose?"

"Never," replied the angler; "I saw her mother once, who was still very lovely, though she was ill then, and died ere the month was out."

"Go! go!" cried his companion, after a moment's thought; "go to-night, by all means; I feel as if good would come of it."

"I do not know how that can be," said the other, musing, "but still I will go; though you know that, in my situation, I think not of men's fair daughters."

"Why not?" asked Franklin Gray, quickly, "why not? What is the situation in which woman and woman's love may not be the jewel of our fate? What is the state or condition that she may not beautify, or soften, or inspirit? Oh! Harry, if you did but know all, you would see that my situation is, of all others, the one in which woman can have the least share; and yet, what were I; what would I become, were it not for the one, the single star that shines for me on earth? When the fierce excitement of some rash enterprise is over; when the brow aches, and the heart is sick and weary, you know not what it is to rest my head upon her bosom, and hear the pulse within that beats for me alone. You know not what it is, in the hours of temporary idleness, to sit by her side, and see her eyes turn thoughtfully from our child to me, and from me to him, and seem busy

with the strange mysterious link that unites us three together. Why, I say, should you not think of woman's love, when you, if not riches, have peace to offer; when, if not splendour, you have an honest name? I tell you, Henry Langford, that when she chose me I was an unknown stranger in a foreign land; that there were strange tales of how and why I sought those shores; that I had naught to offer but poverty and a bold warm heart. She asked no question; she sought no explanation; she demanded not what was my trade, what were my prospects, whither I would lead her, what should be her after fate. She loved and was beloved; for her, that was enough; and she left friends and kindred, and her bright native land, comfort, soft tendance, luxury, and splendour, to be the wife of a houseless wanderer with a doubtful name. He had one thing to give her in return—his whole heart; and it is hers."

His companion gazed earnestly in his face as he spoke, and then suddenly grasped his hand. "Franklin," he said, "you make me sad; your words scarce leave me a doubt of what I have long suspected."

"Ask me no questions," exclaimed the other; "you have promised to ask no questions."

"Neither do I," rejoined his companion. "What you have said scarcely renders a question needful. Franklin, when several years ago we served with the French army on the Rhine, and when first you showed that interest in me, which was strange, till my poor mother's sad history explained it in some degree, you promised me solemnly that if ever you should need money you would share my purse, which, however scanty, has still been more than sufficient for my wants."

"But I have never needed it!" interrupted the other. "The time has not come! When it does, I will."

"You trifle with me, Franklin," rejoined his companion; "if you betake you to rash acts and dangerous enterprises, as your words admit—"

"I may be moved," said Franklin Gray, again interrupting him, "I may be moved by a thousand other causes than the need of money: the love of activity, the restlessness of my nature, habits of danger and enterprise—"

"And is not the love of such a being as you have spoken of," demanded his companion, "is it not sufficient to calm down such a nature, to restrain you from

all that may hurt or injure her. Think, Franklin, think, if you were to fail in some of these attempts; if—if—You are moved; think what would be her fate; think what would be her feelings; nay, listen to me: share what I have, Franklin. It is enough for us both if we be but humble in our thoughts and—”

But the other broke away from him with a sudden start, and something like a tear in his eye. “No, no!” he cried, “no, no!” but then again he turned, ere he had reached the top of the bank, and said, in a low but distinct voice, “Harry, if I succeed in this enterprise for you and in your favour, you shall have your way.”

“But no violence!” replied the angler; “remember, I will have no violence.”

“None,” rejoined Franklin Gray, “none; for I will take means to overawe resistance; and we will, as we well and justly may, enforce your rights and laugh them to scorn who have so long opposed them; and all without violence, if possible.” But the latter words were uttered in a low tone, and were unheard by his companion.

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### CHAPTER III.

PERHAPS the sweetest hour of a sweet season is that which precedes the setting of the sun upon a May day. All the world is taking holyday, from the lowing herd that winds slowly o’er the lea, to the shardborn beetle and the large white moth. The aspect of the sky and earth too—clear, calm, and tranquil—are full of repose. The mistiness of the midday sunshine is away; and the very absence of a portion of the full daylight, and the thin colourless transparency of the evening air, afford that contemplative, but no way drowsy charm which well precedes, by thought tending to adoration, the hour when, in darkness and forgetfulness, we trust ourselves unconscious to the hands of God. The heart of man is but as an instrument from which the great musician, Nature, produces grand harmonies; and the most soothing anthem that rises within the breast is surely elicited by the soft touch of that evening hour.

It had shone calm over the world in those scenes we have lately described, and the last moments of the sun's stay above the horizon were passing away, while, within one of the rooms of the old manor-house of Moorhurst Park, the father and the daughter were sitting tranquilly in the seat of a deep window, gazing over the beautiful view before their eyes, and marking all the wonderful changes of colouring which the gradual descent of the sun and the slow passing of a few light evening clouds brought each moment over the scene. There is in almost every heart some one deep memory, some one powerful feeling, which has its harmonious connexion with a particular hour and with a particular scene; and, as the father and the daughter gazed, and marked the sun sinking slowly in the far west, one remembrance, one image, one sensation, took possession of both their bosoms. The daughter thought of the mother, the father of the wife, that was lost to them for ever. Neither spoke: both tried to suppress the feeling, or, rather, to indulge the feeling while they suppressed its expression. But such efforts are vain, at least with hearts untutored by the cold policies of a superficial world. A tear glistened in the daughter's eye, and she dared not wipe it away lest it should be remarked. The father's eye, indeed, was tearless, but his brow was sad; and as he withdrew his gaze from the scene before him, and turned his looks upon his daughter, it was with a sigh. He marked, too, the bright drop that still hung trembling on her eyelid, catching the last ray of the setting sun; and, knowing the spring whence that drop arose, he cast his arms around her, and pressed her in silence to his breast.

At that very moment, however—for it is still at the time when the deep shy feelings of the warmest hearts peep forth to enjoy some cool secluded hour, that the world is sure to burst upon them, like the cry of the beagles upon the timid hare—at that very moment one of the servants opened the door of the chamber, and announced Captain Henry Langford. Sir Walter Herbert withdrew his arms from his daughter, and took a step forward; and Alice Herbert, though she felt prepossessed in their visitor's favour, felt also almost vexed that he had come so soon to interrupt the sweet but melancholy feelings which were rising in her father's heart and in her own. She gazed with some interest

towards the door, however; and the next instant the angler, whose course through the day we have already traced, entered the apartment. Rod, and line, and fishing-basket had been by this time thrown aside, and he stood before them well, but not gayly dressed, with scrupulous neatness observable in every part of his apparel, and with his wavy brown hair arranged with some care and attention.

His air was distinguished, and not to be mistaken; his person was, as we have before said, eminently handsome; so that, although a stranger to both the father and daughter, he bore with him a letter of recommendation of a very prepossessing kind.

As he entered, Sir Walter Herbert advanced to meet him with the calm dignity of one who, in former years, had mingled with courts and camps; and who felt within his breast the easegiving consciousness of a noble and an upright mind; and he was met by the stranger with the same bearing.

Sir Walter, though not usually familiar, offered him his hand, saying, "Captain Langford, I am very glad to see you; and must explain how it is that I took the liberty of sending you the invitation that has procured me this pleasure. Without intending to act the part of eavesdroppers, my daughter and myself overheard this morning the conclusion of a conversation between you and one of my servants regarding some birds that float about upon the stream; and the few words that fell from you on that occasion breathed a spirit which gave me too strong a temptation to be resisted of seeking your acquaintance, even at the risk of intruding upon the calm and tranquil solitude which you, who are, doubtless, a denizen of cities and courts, seek, in all probability, when you venture into the country."

"It could be no intrusion, sir," replied his guest; "and let me assure you that, in forbidding me to shoot the wildfowl on the stream, your servant imposed upon me no hard condition. Those birds have been a sort of companions to me during my sport for these two or three years past, and I should never have thought of injuring them; but would still less have wished to do so when I knew that you took a pleasure and an interest in them."

"They are associated with past happiness," said Sir Walter; "and, though I believe it is foolish to cling to

things which only awaken regret, yet I confess I do take a pleasure, a sad pleasure, perhaps, in seeing them."

"I cannot but think," replied his guest, "that there are some regrets far sweeter than all our every-day enjoyments. The only real pleasures that I myself now possess are in memories, because my only attachments are with the past."

"You are very young to say so, sir," answered Sir Walter; "you must, at an early age, have broken many sweet ties."

"But one," replied Langford; "for, through life, I have had but one, that between mother and a son; but, of course, it broke with the greater pain from being the only one."

"And your father?" demanded Sir Walter.

"I never knew him," replied the stranger; and, seeing that the conversation might grow painful, Sir Walter Herbert dropped it; and, turning to his daughter, presented the stranger to her, which he had neglected to do before.

It might be that, as the old knight did so, the remembrance of what had passed not long before, regarding the beautiful girl to whom he was now introduced, called the colour rather more brightly into Langford's face; and, certainly, it produced a slight degree of embarrassment in his manner, which he had never felt on such an occasion before. She was, certainly, very beautiful, and that beauty of a very peculiar cast. It was the bright and sunshiny, united with the deep and touching. Her skin was clear and exquisitely fair; her lips full, but beautifully formed; the brow broad and white; and the eyes of that soft peculiar hazel, which, when fringed with long black lashes, perhaps is more expressive than any other colour. The hair, which was very full and luxuriant, was of a brown—several shades lighter than Langford's own—soft and glossy as silk, and catching a golden gleam in all the prominent lights. She was not tall, but her form was perfectly well proportioned, and every full and rounded limb was replete with grace and symmetry.

Langford's slight embarrassment wore off in a moment, and the conversation turned upon more general themes than those with which it begun. Sir Walter and his daughter, from the few words they had heard in



the morning, undoubtedly expected to find in their guest high and kindly feelings, and that grace, too, which such feelings always afford to the demeanour and conversation of those who possess them. But they found much more than they had expected; a rich and cultivated mind, great powers of conversation, much sparkling variety of idea, and an inexhaustible fund of experience and information regarding many things whereof they themselves, if not ignorant, had but a slight knowledge, and which he had gained apparently by travelling far and long in foreign countries, and by mingling with many classes and descriptions of men. There were few subjects on which he could not speak; and, on whatever he did speak, there was something more displayed than mere ordinary judgment. The heart had its part as well as the understanding, and a bright and playful imagination linked the two together.

Had Sir Walter Herbert and his daughter felt inclined to be distant and reserved towards the stranger whom they had invited, they could not have maintained such a demeanour long; for he was one of those who applied for admittance to every door of the human heart, and was sure to find some entrance; but when, on the contrary, they were predisposed to like and esteem him, even the first slight chillness of new acquaintance was speedily done away; and, ere he had been an hour in the house, the reciprocation of feeling and ideas had made them far more intimate with him than with many persons whom they had known for long and uninterrupted years.

Music was talked of, and painting, and sculpture; and in each Langford, without affecting the tone of a connoisseur, displayed that knowledge which is gained rather by a deep feeling for all that is fine and beautiful than from an experimental acquaintance with the arts themselves. He had heard Lulli, and had been present when some of his most celebrated compositions had been first performed; and, though he talked not of the scientific accuracy of this piece of music or of that, he spoke with enthusiasm of the effect which each produced upon the mind; of what feelings they called up; whether they soothed, or inspired, or touched, or saddened, or elevated.

Then, again, when the conversation turned to the sculpture or the painting of Florence or of Rome, he

did not, perhaps he could not, use the jargon of connoisseurs; he did not speak of breadth, and juice, and contour, but he told of how he had been affected by the sight, of what were the sensations produced in his bosom, and in the bosoms of others whom he had known, by the Venus, or the Apollo, or the Laocoon, or the works of Raphael, or Guido, or Titian, or Michael Angelo. In short, he dwelt upon that part of the subject which referred to the mind, the imagination, or the heart; and in regard to which all those who heard him could go along with him, feeling, comprehending, and enjoying all he spoke of or described.

Alice Herbert, though she was not learned in such things, yet had a natural taste which was not uncultivated. In the seclusion in which she dwelt, the ordinary household duties of a young Englishwoman of that period had not been enough for her; and her mind had been occupied with much and various reading, with music, as it was then known and taught, and with drawing; though in the latter art she had received no instruction but from her mother, who had acquired it herself while in exile at the court of France. Her father, also, had some taste in and much feeling for the arts, and she joined eagerly in the conversation between him and Langford, often leading it, with the sportive eagerness of a young and enthusiastic mind, to a thousand collateral subjects, which constantly elicited from their new companion remarks full of freshness and of genius.

She listened, well pleased; something more than well pleased, struck and surprised: and from that night's interview she bore away matter for deep thought and meditation; the most favourable effect that man can produce when he wishes to make an impression on the heart of woman.

Did Langford seek to produce such an effect? Perhaps not; or, most likely, he would not have succeeded so well; but he was pleased himself; he, too, was struck and surprised; and, carried away by his own feelings, he took unconsciously the best means of interesting hers.

But the interview ended not so soon; and they had scarcely sat down to the evening meal when a fourth person was added to the party. He came in unannounced, and seemed to be a familiar and a favoured

guest. Young, handsome, and prepossessing, with a frank and noble countenance, an air full of ease and grace, and an expression in some degree thoughtful rather than sad, his coming, and the hour and manner in which he came, seemed to Henry Langford a warning that, if there were a daydream dawning in his bosom in regard to the sweet girl by whom he sat, it would be better to extinguish it at once. But feelings such as he had never experienced before came across his bosom; an eager and irritable anxiety, an inclination to retire into himself, and to watch the conduct of those around him; a tendency, whether he would or not, to be ungracious, not alone towards the stranger, but towards all; such were the strange and new sensations which he experienced. There is no stronger indication of a new passion having begun to take a hold of our heart, than a change in our ordinary sensations in regard to things apparently trifling. Langford was a great inquisitor of his own bosom, and by that inquisition had, through life, saved himself from much pain. The examination in the present instance was made in a minute; and, before the stranger had come round, and had been introduced to himself, he had asked his own heart more than one keen question. He had demanded why he felt displeased at any addition to their party at all; why he felt disposed to deny to the stranger those graces of person and manner which he certainly possessed, and which were at once discernible; why he watched so eagerly the manner in which Sir Walter received him; why he gazed so intently upon Alice Herbert's cheek, to see if the telltale blood would rise up in it, and betray any secret of the heart. He asked himself all these questions in a moment, and suddenly felt that he had been dreaming; ay, dreaming sweet dreams without knowing it. He banished them in a moment.

Sir Walter received the stranger kindly and familiarly, though with a slight degree of stateliness, which was from time to time observable in his demeanour to all. It was a stateliness evidently not natural to him, for his character was frank and kindly; and this, perhaps, was the only little piece of affectation that shaded—for it did not stain—a mind all gentleness, and warmth, and affection. He shook hands warmly with the young man, called him Edward, and suffered him to go round

to shake hands with his daughter before he introduced him to their guest. While he did speak with Alice Herbert we have said that Langford's eye was fixed upon her cheek. It betrayed nothing, however: the colour varied not by a shade; and, though the lips smiled and the eye sparkled as she welcomed him, there was no agitation to be remarked.

Langford was accustomed to read other hearts as well as his own, and the translation he put upon the indications he beheld was, not that there was no love between the stranger and Alice Herbert, but that the period of emotion was past. He was not usually an unskilful reader of hearts; but in interpreting that book it is necessary to take care that no passion in our own breast puts a false gloze upon the text. Whether such was the case in the present instance will be seen hereafter; but, at all events, the knowledge Langford speedily obtained of what his own feelings might become taught him to regulate and restrain them. He resolved that the coming of the stranger should produce no change in his demeanour; that he would not forget the suavity of his manner, or let any one around remark an alteration which to them would be unaccountable, and which he never could have an opportunity of explaining.

After having given his visiter an opportunity of speaking for a moment to his daughter, Sir Walter Herbert introduced him to Captain Langford, saying, "Captain Langford, Lord Harold, the son of our good neighbour on the hill. Edward, Captain Langford, one whom I know you will esteem."

Langford gazed upon the new guest earnestly; but, whatever were his first thoughts, his mind almost immediately reverted to Lord Harold's situation in regard to Alice Herbert. The words in which the young nobleman's introduction to himself was couched, even more than what he had seen before, made him say in his own heart, "The matter is settled. Idle dreams! idle dreams! I thought I had held imagination with a stronger rein."

Lord Harold unslung his sword, and, giving it to one of the servants to hang it up behind the door, he sat down to supper with the party, and the conversation was renewed. The new guest looked at Langford more than once with a keen and scrutinizing expression,

though his countenance was not of a cast with which that expression suited, the natural one being of a frank and open character, with somewhat of indecision about the mouth, but an air of sternness, perhaps of fierceness, upon the brow. There was nothing in it, however, either very shrewd or penetrating; but, nevertheless, such a look was not uncalled for; for, the moment that Langford resumed his seat after bowing to Lord Harold on their introduction, he turned deadly pale, and remained so for several minutes.

It might be that there was a struggle going on within to overcome himself, which none of those present knew or understood; but the outward expression thereof was quite sufficient to call the attention of the whole party; and it was, as we have said, some time before he had sufficiently mastered himself to resume the conversation with spirit. Even when he did so, there was a tone of sadness mingled with it, which rendered it quite different from what it had been before. It was no longer the gay, the sparkling, the playful. It was no longer the mountain current, rushing over a clear and varied bed, now eddying round every larger object in its course, now rippling brightly over the pebbles, which it seemed to gild as it flowed among them; but it had become a deep stream, strong, powerful, and, though still clear and rapid, yet calm, and shady, and dark, from its very depth.

Lord Harold took his part in the conversation well and gracefully. A high education and an early acquaintance with the court, which had polished but not spoiled him, acting upon a heart originally good, feeling, and generous, had improved what powers of mind he possessed as far as possible. His talents were, however, evidently inferior to those of Langford; and though he himself, apparently, was as much struck with the charm of the other's conversation as either Sir Walter or his daughter had been, yet he felt he was far surpassed by the new guest at the Manor House; and besides that sensation, which is in itself a heavy burden to be borne by those who seek to please, there was an indescribable something in Langford's presence which put a restraint upon him, and even made him bend down his glance before that of the stranger. It was late before any one prepared to depart, and the first who did so was Langford. He took leave of Sir

Walter with graceful thanks for his hospitality and kindness, and the old knight expressed a hope that they should see him several times again before he left the country; adding, "Of course you do not mean to limit your angling to one day."

"I really do not know," replied Langford, with a somewhat melancholy smile; "I may be summoned to the capital at a moment's notice; but, at all events, I shall not fail to pay my respects here before I go. I will take your hint, Sir Walter, as a permission to continue my depredations on the trout."

"As often and as much as you please," rejoined the old knight. "The stream, as far as my manor extends, shall always contribute to your sport."

"I hope," said Lord Harold, taking a step forward with graceful courtesy, "that Captain Langford will not make Sir Walter's manor the boundary. Our land's march, and the stream which flows on beyond, my father will make as much at his service as that in Sir Walter's property is already."

Langford thanked him, though somewhat coldly; but, after he had taken leave of Miss Herbert, he turned to Lord Harold, and advanced as if to shake hands with him; then suddenly seemed to recollect himself, and, wishing him good-night in a more distant manner, left the apartment.

Lord Harold remained behind for nearly an hour, and the conversation naturally rested on him who had just left them. The young nobleman praised him with a sort of forced praise, which evidently sprang more from candour and the determination to do justice than from really liking him. Sir Walter spoke of him warmly and enthusiastically, declaring he had seldom met any one at all equal to him. Alice Herbert said little, but what she did say was very nearly an echo of her father's opinion. After his character, his appearance, his manners, and his talents had been discussed, his state of fortune and history became the subjects of conjecture. Lord Harold was surprised when he heard that the Knight of Moorhurst had invited an unknown angler to his table, and had introduced him to his daughter; and, though he said nothing, yet Sir Walter marked the expression of his countenance, and was somewhat nettled that the young man, even in thought, should comment on his conduct.

Lord Harold, however, soon obliterated any evil impression from the mind of the kindhearted old knight; and, turning the conversation to other things, his spirits seemed to rise after Langford was gone, and he found opportunity of whispering a word or two in Alice Herbert's ear. Whatever words those were, they seemed to take her much by surprise, for she started, turned pale, then coloured highly; and, after a few minutes passed in what seemed uneasy silence, she rose and retired to rest. Lord Harold gazed for a moment or two upon the ground, then looked earnestly at Sir Walter, as if there had been something in his mind that he would fain have spoken; but, in the end, apparently irresolute, he took down his sword, gave orders to a servant to have his horse brought round, and, taking leave of the good knight, mounted and galloped away, followed by two attendants.

The moon had just gone down, but the night was clear, and the heavens sparkling with a thousand stars. Lord Harold's way lay through some thick woods for about two miles, and then descended suddenly to the bank of the stream, where the trees fell away and left the bright waters wandering on through a soft meadow. As the young nobleman issued forth from among the plantations, he saw a tall dark figure standing by the river, with the arms crossed upon the chest, and the eyes apparently bent upon the waters. The sound of the horses' feet caused the stranger to turn; and, although the darkness of the night prevented Lord Harold from distinguishing his features, the whole form and air at once showed him that it was Langford. He wished him good-evening as he passed in a courteous tone, and was pulling up his horse to add some common observation; but Langford did not seem to recognise him; and, merely wishing him "Good-night," in answer to his salutation, turned away and walked down the stream.

## CHAPTER IV.

THERE has scarcely been a poet or a prose writer, in any country or in any tongue, who has not first declared that there is nothing like love, and then attempted to liken it to something. The truth is, that fine essence is compounded of so many sweet things, that, though we may find some resemblance to this or that peculiar quality, which forms a part, we shall find nothing which can compare with the whole ; nothing so bright, nothing so sweet, nothing so entrancing, nothing so ennobling ; must we add, nothing so rare ? Every fool and every villain impudently fancies that he can love, without knowing that his very nature renders it impossible to him. Every libertine and every debauchee talks of love, without knowing that he has destroyed, in his own bosom, the power of comprehending what love is ; that he has shut down and batted the pure fountain that can never be opened again. Every one who can feel a part of love—and that, in general, the coarser part—believes that he has the high privilege of loving ; as though a man were to drink the mere lees, and call it wine. Oh no ! How infinite are the qualities requisite, each giving strength, and vigour, and fire to the other ! There must be a pure and noble heart, capable of every generous and every ardent feeling ; there must be a grand and comprehensive mind, able to form and receive every elevated thought and fine idea ; there must be a warm and vivid imagination, to sport with, and combine, and brighten every beautiful theme of fancy ; there must be a high and unearthly soul, giving the spirit's intensity to the earthly passion. Even when all this is done, it is but a sweet melody ; the harmony is incomplete, till there be another being tuned alike, and breathing, not similar, but responsive tones. Then, and not till then, there may be love. Man, lay thy hand upon thy heart, and ask thyself, " Is it not so with me ? " If so, happy, thrice and fully happy art thou. If not, strive that it may be so ; for, rightly felt, the most ennobling of all earthly impulses is love.

The night that we have seen commence passed over  
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not tranquilly to any of the party which had been assembled at the Manor House. Alice Herbert laid her sweet limbs down on the couch which had so often brought her calm soft slumbers, but it was long ere she closed her eyes; and, before she did so, there dropped from them some tears. Sir Walter lay upon his bed and thought, and a single sentence will show the subject of his meditation. "Poor boy," he said, in a low tone, after thinking long, "he is doomed to disappointment."

Lord Harold tossed in feverish anxiety; and for many an hour Langford cooled his burning brow by the night air on the banks of the stream. Day was fast dawning, when he prepared to return to the inn; but, ere he had crossed the bridge, a boy of ten years of age or thereabout, with fair curling hair and a sunny countenance, crossed his path, saying quickly, "My master waits to speak with you."

"Where is he, Jocelyn?" demanded Langford.

"In the thick wood in the manor park," replied the boy, "just above the stream; but I will show you."

"Go on!" said Langford; and they were both soon hidden by the trees.

The park of the old Manor House, in its laying out and arrangement, resembled the period of our tale; that is to say, it lay between two epochs. There was still, in the neighbourhood of the house, the old trim flower-garden, with its rows of sombre yew-trees; there was also that more magnificent kind of billiard-table in which our robust ancestors used to take delight, the bowling-green; there were also several long alleys of pine and beech, carried as far as the inequality of the ground would permit; but then, beyond that again, came the park scenery, in which we now delight; the deep wood, the dewy lawns, the old unpruned trees, with every here and there a winding walk, cut neatly among the old roots and stems, and taking advantage of all the most beautiful points of view. But we will dwell on such matters no longer; it is with pictures of the human heart that we have to do.

The dew was still upon the turf in the bowling-green and in the long grassy walks of the flower-garden when Alice Herbert came forth to take her morning ramble alone. She was fond of tasting the fresh air of the early day; and enjoyed, as much as ever poet or

painter did, the varied lights and shades cast by the rising sun over the world ; lights and shades like the fitful visions of our boyhood, when the rising sun of life renders all the shadows longer and deeper, and the brightness doubly bright. In these morning expeditions, when she went forth to enrich one hour of her young life with treasures from the bosom of nature—treasures which she stored up, hardly knowing that she did so, to be employed, long after they were gained, in decorating and embellishing all her being—there was scarcely anything that met her eye, or any sound that met her ear, that was not marked and thought of ; examined and commented upon ; played with, embellished, and illustrated by her rich and poetical imagination. The fluttering butterfly that passed before her was not remarked for the beauty of its colouring alone ; but fancy found in it an image of a thousand other things ; the mind moralized upon it, and the heart took the lesson home. The clouds even, the slow fanciful clouds, as, writhing themselves into strange shapes, they floated over the spring sky, sweeping lightly with their blue shadows the soft bosom of the earth, gave equal food for imagination, and induced manifold trains of thought ; and in the lark's clear melody the ear of Alice Herbert heard something more than merely sweet sounds : her heart joined in his anthem ; her thoughts took the musical tone of his sweet song ; and her spirit rose upon his wings towards the gates of heaven.

It often happened that, in these walks, her father bore her company, and it was always a joy and satisfaction to her when he did so ; for between father and daughter there was that perfect reciprocity of feeling that made it delightful to her to be able to pour forth in his ear all the thoughts that sprang up from her heart ; and to hear, as she leaned clinging to his arm, all the sweet and gentle, the simple, but strong-minded and noble ideas which the face of nature suggested to her father's fancy. To him she would listen well pleased, though many a creature of the great world might have scoffed at the simplicity of the words he uttered. To him she would tell all she herself felt ; for never, from her childhood upward, had her father checked the confidence of his child, even by a laugh at her young ignorance.

Thus, when she came down in the morning to go out, she would pause for a moment at her father's door to

hear if he were stirring. If there were sounds within, she would knock gently for admission; if there were no sounds, she would pass on her way. This morning her father was still sleeping when she came forth, for he had passed a somewhat restless night, and she went on alone with perhaps a more grave and thoughtful air than usual. She lingered for some moments in the flower-garden; and then, with a slow step, took her way up the gravel-walk which led into one of the park paths, running along through the woods which crowned the bank above the stream.

The path she followed was like a varied but a pleasant life, now emerging into full sunshine as it approached the edge of the bank, now dipping down into cool and contemplative shadow as it wound in again among the trees, now softly rising, now gently descending, but never so rapidly as to hurry the breath or to hasten the footsteps. It was broad, too, and even; airy and free. Along this, then, she wandered, casting off, as she went, the slight degree of melancholy that at first shaded her, and turning her mind to its usual subjects of contemplation. She thus proceeded for more than a mile, and had turned to go back again to the house, when, as she approached a spot where another path joined that which she was following, she suddenly heard quick footsteps coming towards her.

The mind has often, in such cases, rapid powers of combination, seeming almost to reach intuition; and though Alice Herbert had no apparent means of ascertaining who was the person that approached, yet she instantly turned pale, and became, for a moment, a good deal agitated. With woman's habitual mastery over her own emotions, however, she recovered herself almost immediately, and was walking on as calmly as before, when Lord Harold, as she had expected, joined her in her walk.

"Good-morning, Alice," he said; "I have just seen your father, and have come out to meet you."

"Good-morning, Edward," was her answer. "You must have been early up to be over here so soon. But, as my father has risen, let us go in to breakfast."

"Nay, stay with me a moment, Alice," said the young man; "it is but seldom that I have a few minutes alone with you!"

Alice made no reply, but continued on her way towards the house, with her eyes cast down and her cheek a little pale. Lord Harold at length took her hand and detained her gently, saying, "Nay, Alice, you must stay; I have your father's permission for keeping you a little longer; though I fear, Alice, from what I see, that I shall keep you here in vain. Alice," he added, after making an attempt to command his feelings, "dear Alice, did you mark the few words I said to you last night?"

Alice Herbert paused for a moment, and one might have heard her heart beating, so greatly was she agitated; but at length, evidently exerting a strong effort of resolution, she looked up and replied, "I did mark them, Edward, and they gave me very great pain, and I have been grieved about them ever since."

"Why, why?" demanded Lord Harold, eagerly; "why should they give you pain, when it is in your own power to render them, for me at least, the happiest words that ever were spoken; and to give me an opportunity of devoting my whole life to make you happy in return?"

"It is not in my own power, Edward," replied Alice, firmly but gently, not attempting to withdraw the hand that Lord Harold still held, but leaving it in his, cold, tranquil, ungiven, though unresisting; "it is not in my own power."

"Then am I so very distasteful to you," he exclaimed, sorrowfully, "that no attention, no pains, no affection, no time can make you regard me with complaisance?"

Alice was pained. "Indeed, indeed, Edward, you do me wrong," she said. "You are not distasteful to me. I do regard you with complaisance. You know that your society is anything but disagreeable to me; but yet I cannot love you as you ought to be loved, as you have a right to be loved; nor can any attention, nor any kindness which you could show me, nor any time, make a difference in this respect. We have known each other from our childhood. You have shown me every degree of kindness, every sort of attention that any one can show. You have gained my esteem and my regard; I have always felt towards you almost as a sister; and perhaps that very feeling may have prevented me from feeling more."

"Nay, but, Alice, still hear me!" replied Lord Harold,

earnestly ; "hear me, hear me patiently ; for remember, I am pleading for something more than life ; for the whole happiness of life ! You say you have regarded me as a brother, that you esteem me, that you do not dislike my society ; were I to become your husband, might not these feelings grow warmer, stronger !"

"They might or they might not," answered Alice ; "but, Edward, I must not, I cannot, I will not put them to the test. There is but one thing will ever induce me to marry any man ; loving him deeply, strongly, and entirely ; loving him with my whole heart."

"And is there such a man ?" demanded Lord Harold, suddenly, and at the same time fixing his eyes keenly upon her.

Alice lifted hers in return, full, but somewhat reproachfully to his countenance. "Edward," she said, "that is a question you have no right to put ! However," she added, after a moment's pause, "because we have been companions from our childhood, because I do really esteem you, I will answer your question. There is no one who has such a hold on me ; and, till I meet with such, I will never marry any one."

"Then, then, dear Alice, there is yet hope !" he exclaimed :

"You construe what I have said very wrongly," she replied. "Do not ! oh ! do not, Lord Harold, by taking words of kindness for words of encouragement, force me to speak that harshly which I would soften as much as may be."

"Nay, Alice," answered Lord Harold, "your lesson comes rather late to produce any benefit to me. I fear that I may have mistaken, before now, words and acts of mere kindness for words and acts of encouragement. I have—I acknowledge it—I have entertained hopes ; I have thought that Alice sometimes smiled upon me."

"Now, Edward, for the first time since I have known you," replied Alice, "you are ungenerous, you are unkind. Brought up together from childhood, seeing each other constantly, looking upon you almost as a brother, esteeming, as I acknowledge I esteem you, I could but act as I have acted. Has there been any change in my conduct towards you from what that conduct was five, six, or seven years ago ? Ought there to have been any change in my conduct towards you till I knew that there was a change in your feelings towards me ? Would

"you not have been the first to accuse me of caprice, of unkindness, of forgetfulness of old regard and early friendship? Oh! Edward, why should anything thus come to interrupt such friendship! to bring a coldness over such regard!"

"Pardon me, pardon me, Alice," said Lord Harold; "I was wrong to refer to my hopes; but I meant not to say that you had willingly given them encouragement; I meant rather to excuse myself for entertaining them than to blame you. Blame you I did not, I could not. All that you have done has been gentle and right. Do not, then, Alice, do not let anything which has passed to-day interrupt our friendship, or bring, as you say, a coldness over your regard for me. Let me still see you as heretofore; let me still be to you as a friend, as a brother. There is no knowing what change may take place in the human heart, what sudden accidents may plant in it feelings which were not there before. Some good chance may thus befriend me; some happy circumstance may awaken new feelings in your heart."

"I cannot suffer you to deceive yourself," she said. "Such will never be the case. It would be cruel of me, it would be wrong both to myself and you, could I suffer you to think I should change. Oh no! This cannot have taken so strong a hold of you as not to be governable by your reason. I shall ever esteem you, Edward, I shall ever be your friend, but I can be nothing more; and let me beseech you to use your powers of mind, which are great, to overcome feelings which can only make you unhappy, and grieve me to hear that you entertain them."

She spoke in a manner, in a tone that left no hope; but, though he had become deadly pale, he seemed now to have made up his mind to his fate. "Fear not, Alice," he said, "fear not! Whatever I suffer you shall hear no more of it. Love you, Alice, I shall ever, to the last day of my life; but trouble you with that love will I no more. There is only one thing I have to request; and that I do from no idle motive of selfish vanity, from no fear of being pointed at and pitied by our friends as Alice Herbert's rejected lover, but from motives of some importance to all. Do not let it be known that such words have passed between us as have been spoken this day."

"You cannot suppose me capable of speaking such a thing at all," cried Alice, both mortified and surprised.

"Oh no!" he said; "I mean to ask that it may remain a secret even from my father."

"With your own father," said Alice, "you must, of course, deal as you please; but with mine—"

"Yours knows my object in coming to-day already," interrupted Lord Harold, "and must, of course, know the result. Mine has given his fullest consent, upon my honour, to my seeking your hand. All I ask is that he may not know I have sought it, and it has been refused. Let me visit here as usual; let me—"

"I had heard," said Alice, "that you were going up to London. Why not do so at once?"

"I will," he answered; "I will. But that will only be for a few days; and, at my return, there must be no difference, Alice. Promise me that; promise, if but for the sake of early friendship, for the sake of childish companionship."

"Well," she said, after a moment's pause, "well; but there must be no mistaking, Edward."

He looked pained. "Do not suppose, Alice," he replied, "that I have any ungenerous object. When I ask this favour, I ask it for your sake as well as my own! You must not ask me how or why, but trust me."

"I will," she said, "I will! I have always found you honourable and generous; but, indeed, let me say, without thinking me unkind, that for your own sake, with such feelings as you possess towards me, it were better to be here as little as may be till you have conquered them."

"That will never be, Alice," he answered; "that will never be. It is enough that you shall never hear more of them. But here comes Silly John, as people call him," he added, bitterly. "It is fit that a fool should break off a conversation begun with such mad and silly hope as mine! Let us go back to the manor, Alice; we shall never get rid of him."

The person who thus interrupted the painful interview between Lord Harold and Alice Herbert was one of a class now much more rarely seen than in those times. There were, it is true, even then, hospitals and asylums for the insane, but they were few; and Silly John, as he was called, was not one of those whom the men of that day would ever have dreamed of putting in

confinement. He was perfectly harmless, though often very annoying; and the malady of the brain under which he suffered was rather an aberration of intellect than the complete loss of judgment. It went a great deal farther, indeed, than in the case of the *half saved*, in that most beautiful of biographies, that quintessence of rare learning and excellent thought, *The Doctor*. He was decidedly insane upon many points; and upon all, the intellect, if not weak, was wandering and unsettled. His real name was John Graves: he had been usher in a small school, and, consequently, was not without a portion of learning, such as it was; but his great passion was for music and poetry: the one would call him into a state of sad though tranquil silence; the very name of the other would excite him to an alarming pitch of loquacity. Withal, he was not without a certain degree of shrewdness in some matters; and, what was still more singular and apparently anomalous, his memory of events and dates was peculiarly strong, and his adherence to truth invariable.

He now approached Alice and her companion with a quick step, dressed in an old wide coat of philomot colour, with a steeple-crowned hat, which had seen the wars of the great rebellion, rusty and battered, but still whole, and decorated with two cock's feathers which he had torn himself from the tail of some luckless chanticleer. His gray worsted hose were darned with many a colour; and in his lean but muscular hand he carried a strong cudgel, which steadied his steps, being slightly lame in the right leg. When he had come within a few feet of the lady and her suiter, he stopped directly in the path, so that they could not pass without going among the trees; and, for a moment or two, looked intently in both their faces, with his small gray eyes peering into theirs, and his large head leaning considerably to the side, so as to bring the heavy ashy features quite out of the natural line.

"Well, John, what do you want?" demanded Alice, who had been familiar with the sight of the poor man from her childhood. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"No, Mistress Alice; no, my pretty maid!" replied the man. "Only take care of your sweet self, lady. I came up to be at the conference; wherever there is a conference, there am I; and I heard you and Harold



talking when I was on the other side of the bushes; and now, lo! the conference seems over."

"It is so for to-day, at least, John," replied Lord Harold; "so now let us pass, my good man."

"Call me not good, Harold," he replied.

" 'There yet was good but one  
That trod this cold earth's breast,  
And now to heaven he's gone  
For our eternal rest.' "

But you see I was right, Harold. / They call me silly, but I am not silly in matters of love. I told you how it would be this morning as you crossed the bridge."

"My good man, I heard you say something," replied the young nobleman, "but what I did not know."

"You should have listened, then," replied the madman. "Always listen when any one speaks to you! Did you not learn that at school? Always listen, especially to the masters. Now, if you had listened, you would have heard: I told you she would not have you."

Lord Harold turned red, and Alice felt for him; but he replied, good-humouredly, as they walked on with the madman following them, "I rather imagine, John, you have been listening to some purpose."

"No, I have not been listening, but I heard," replied the madman; "and two other pairs of ears did the same."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Lord Harold; "and who might they be?"

"Oh, the fox and the dog!" replied Silly John, in a rambling way. "The fox and the dog, to be sure. The dog wanted to go away when you came, but the fox would not let him, saying, that if they stirred they would be heard and seen, and then folks would wonder what they came there for so early of a morning; was not that a cunning fox! But I could have told him what they both came there for, if I had liked; but that would never do."

"And, pray, what was the dog's name?" demanded Lord Harold, in a quiet tone, well knowing that an appearance of curiosity would often set their half-witted companion rambling to different subjects from that which had before engaged him.

"Oh, every dog has a name," replied the madman; "but they change their names as well as men and wo-

men, Harold. Now this dog's name was once Lion, and it is now Trusty, and to-morrow it may be Lord. I have known dogs have twenty names in their lives. God help us! we are queer creatures! and, talking of dogs, I had a dog when I was second master at Uppington school," and so he rambled on.

There was now no stopping him or recalling him to the subject; and he followed Alice and Lord Harold, keeping close to the side of the latter, and talking incessantly, but now so deeply engaged in the wild and disordered stream of his own thoughts, that, taking no farther notice of the conversation which the young nobleman renewed with his fair companion, and continued with a low voice till they reached the house, he went on volubly, touching upon a thousand subjects, and darting after every collateral idea that was suggested by a chance word spoken even by himself.

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## CHAPTER V.

THE day which we have begun in the last chapter passed over without any other event of importance. Lord Harold left Alice at the door of the house, mounted his horse, and departed. Alice communicated to her father all that had taken place, and found him more grieved than she had expected, but not at all surprised. The angler was again seen fishing in the stream as the first shadows of evening began to fall; but his efforts were not so successful as before, and he retired early to rest.

The following morning was again a bright one; too bright, indeed, for his sport; and in the course of the forenoon Langford made his appearance at the Manor House, and paid a lengthened visit. At first he found only Sir Walter Herbert at home; but the visiter seemed to enjoy his conversation much, and the good old knight suffered it to be sufficiently evident that the society of his new acquaintance was anything but disagreeable to him. In the course of half an hour, however, Alice Herbert herself appeared; and not only did Langford's eye light up with pleasure, but the conversation, which

had before been of somewhat a grave, if not of a sad cast, instantly, as if by magic, became bright and sparkling, like the dark woods in the fairy tale, which, by a stroke of the enchanter's wand, are changed to crystal palaces and illuminated gardens. Alice, without knowing what had passed before, felt that her presence had produced a change. She felt, too, that her society had an influence upon Langford; that it called forth and brought into activity the treasures and capabilities of his mind; and, if truth must be spoken, it was not unpleasant to her to feel that such was the case.

We may go further still, and look a little deeper into her heart. Her acquaintance with Langford, short as it had been, had proved most disadvantageous to the hopes and wishes of Lord Harold; but, in saying this, we mean no more than we do say. She was not—hers was not a nature to become in so short a time—in love with Henry Langford; nor, indeed, so rapidly to become in love with any one on the face of the earth. She was capable of deep, and intense, and ardent feeling, and the depths of her heart were full of warm affections. But the waves of profound waters are not easily stirred up by light winds; a ripple may curl the surface, but the bosom of the deep is still. She was not in love with Langford; but had she not known him, it is possible, barely possible, that, though she would not have accepted Lord Harold at once, she might, as many a woman does, have suffered him to pursue his suit till she felt herself bound in honour to give him her hand, without feeling any ardent attachment towards him even at last, and trusting for happiness to esteem and regard. Her acquaintance with Langford, however, had given her feelings a more decided character; had taught her that she could not marry any one whom she did not absolutely love. It went no farther; but, as far as that, the sort of surprise and pleasure which his conversation had given her certainly did go; and now, on their second meeting, there might be a kind of thrilling satisfaction at her heart in finding that her society had an influence over him; that his eye sparkled with irrepressible light; that his thoughts, and his manner, and his feelings seemed to take a deeper tone as soon as she appeared.

So went on the conversation for some time; but feeling, while it proceeded, that though they might be talk-

ing of indifferent subjects, they were thinking a good deal of each other; and thus they established between themselves all unwittingly a secret sympathy, which but too often throws wide the doors of the heart, to let in a strange guest who soon takes possession of the place.

The course of the conversation speedily brought Sir Walter to remark, "You must have visited many foreign countries, Captain Langford, and apparently not as our young men usually do, in a hurried and rapid expedition, to see without seeing, and to hear without understanding. I must confess it was the case with myself in my young days; but the habit of travel was not then so much upon the nation as at present, and it was something for a country gentleman to have been abroad at all."

"I have been very differently situated, Sir Walter," replied his guest; "though not born upon the Continent, being, thank God! an Englishman, yet the greater part of my early life was spent in other lands. My mother was not of this country, and she loved it not, nor, indeed, had occasion to love it. We resided much in France and much in Italy; some short time, too, was passed in Spain; but those visits were in early years, and I have since seen more of various countries while serving with our troops under Turenne. I was very young, indeed a mere boy, when the British forces in which I served were recalled from the service of France; but I was one of those who judged, perhaps wrongly, that England had no right to leave her allies in the midst of a severe war, and who therefore remained with the French forces till the peace was concluded. I have since served for many years in several other countries; and I have always been of opinion, that while there is no life which affords more opportunity for idleness than a soldier's, if his natural disposition so lead him, there is no life which gives so much opportunity of improvement, if he be but inclined to improve."

Alice had listened eagerly and attentively, for Langford had come near a subject which had become of interest to her—his own fate and history. Sir Walter listened, too, with excited expectation; but their guest turned the conversation immediately to other things, and shortly after took his leave and left them.

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When he was gone Sir Walter himself could not refrain from saying, "That is certainly an extraordinary young man. Poor fellow! I much fear, Alice, that he is one of those whom the faults of their parents—the weakness of a mother, and the vices of a father—have sent abroad upon the world without the legitimate ties of kindred."

"Oh! no, indeed, my dear father," cried Alice, "I cannot believe that. He would never speak so boldly and so tenderly of his mother if there were any stain upon her name. He has twice mentioned her, and each time I have seen a glow of mingled love and pride come up in his countenance."

"Well, I trust it is so," replied Sir Walter, "for otherwise no situation can be more lamentable; with no legitimate relations of his own, with no hope of uniting himself to any upright and ancient house, for that bar sinister must always be an insuperable objection to every family of pure and honourable blood."

Perhaps Alice might not see why it should be so; but she knew her father's prejudices upon that point well, and she dropped the subject.

In the mean while the person who had thus afforded them matter for speculation returned to the inn, sat, read and wrote for some time in his own chamber, and then sauntered forth with a book in his hand, and his rod and line left behind, in order to meditate more at leisure by the side of the stream, wherein, during the whole of the preceding evening, he had lost his time in unsuccessful angling. He was not at all inclined to renew his sport; and, if truth were to be spoken, he took his book more to cover his meditations than to prompt them.

Let us draw back the curtain, however, for a moment, and look through the window in his breast, in order to see what were the motives and causes which rendered even that sport, which has been called "The contemplative man's recreation," too importunate an occupation for the body to suffer the agitated mind to deliberate with ease. We have seen what had been the effect of Alice Herbert's society upon him during the first evening of their acquaintance: he could not but admire her beauty, for it was not of that cold and abstracted kind which may be seen and commented on by the mind, without producing any other emotion. It was of

what we may call the most taking sort of beauty ; it was of that sort which goes at once to the heart, and thence appeals to the mind, which cannot but admit its excellence. But still, even had he fallen in love that night, it might have been called love at first sight, and yet have implied a very false position. During each of the preceding years, he had spent nearly six weeks in the small country town we have described ; and, in the neighbourhood of Alice Herbert, he had heard from every lip but one account of her character. He had spoken of her with many, and every one with whom he spoke loved her.

He might, therefore, be well pleased to love her too when he found that to virtue and excellence were joined beauty, talents, and sweetness, such as he had never beheld united before. We have seen, also, what was the conclusion he had come to when he beheld her in the society of Lord Harold ; and we may add that he was more mortified, disappointed, and angry with himself than he was at all inclined to admit. When, however, on the following day—placed in a situation from which he could not retreat unperceived—he had been an unintentional, and even an unwilling witness to a part of her conversation with Lord Harold, and when from that part he learned undeniably that she rejected that young nobleman's suit, he felt grateful to her for reconciling him with himself, and for removing so speedily the mortification of the preceding evening. That which had been at first but a mere spark upon Hope's altar, and had dwindled away till it seemed extinct, blazed up into a far brighter flame than before ; and in their second interview he felt as if an explanation had taken place between them, and that she had told him, "I am to be won, if you can find the right way and use sufficient diligence."

But still there was much to be thought of, there was much to be considered, there were peculiar points in his own situation which rendered the chance of gaining her father's consent to his suit almost desperate. He felt, he knew, that if he lingered long near her, he should love her with all the intensity of a strong and energetic mind, of a generous and feeling heart ; he felt, too, from indications which he did not pause to examine, but which were sufficient for him, that there was a chance of his winning her love in return. But, then,

if the giving his heart and the gaining hers was but to produce misery to both, ought he, ought he to pause for a moment ere he decided on flying for ever from a scene of such temptation! But then came in again the voice of hope, representing prospects the most improbable as the most likely, changing the relative bearings of all the circumstances around him, and whispering that, even for the bare chance of winning such happiness, he might well stake the tranquillity of his whole life. Such were the thoughts that agitated him, with many another on which it is needless here to touch. Such was the theme for meditation on which he pored while wandering on beside the stream.

The afternoon had gone by, and the brightness of the day had become obscured, not only by the sinking of the sun, but by some large heavy clouds which had rolled up, and seemed to portend a thunder-storm. Langford had looked up twice to the sky, not with any purpose of returning home, for the rain he feared not; and, in beholding the grand contention of the elements, he had always felt an excitement and elevation from his boyhood. There had always seemed to him something in the bright light of the flame of heaven, and in the roaring voice of the thunder, which raised high thoughts, and incited to noble efforts and great and mighty aspirations. He looked up twice, however, to mark the progress of the clouds, as, writhing themselves into strange shapes, they took possession of the sky, borne by the breath of a quiet sultry wind, which seemed scarcely powerful enough to move their heavy masses through the atmosphere.

When he looked up a third time Langford's eye was attracted to the opposite bank by the form of the half-witted man, Silly John, making eager signs to him without speaking, although, from the point at which he stood upon this slope, Langford could have heard every word with ease.

As soon as he saw that he had caught the angler's eye, however, the half-witted man called to him vehemently to come over, pointing with his stick towards a path through the trees, and shouting, "You are wanted there!"

Langford paused, doubting whether he should cross or not; for, though the stream was shallow and the trouble but little, still the man that called him was, as

he well knew, insane, and might be urged merely by some idle fancy.

While he hesitated, however, the other ran down the bank, exclaiming, when he had come close to the margin, "Quick, quick, Master Harry, or ill may happen to her you love best!"

Langford stayed not to ask himself who that was, but crossed the stream in a moment, demanding, "What do you mean, John! what ill is likely to happen to—"

He was about to add the name of her who had so recently and busily occupied his thoughts; but, suddenly remembering himself, he stopped short, and the half-witted man burst into a laugh, exclaiming, "What! you wo'n't say it, Master Harry! Well, come along with me quick; you will find I am right. I settled it all for you long ago, when I was an usher at Uppington school: and I said you should marry her, whether the old lord liked it or not. But come on! come on quick! There are two of the foxes down there waiting by the dingle just beyond the park gates. You know what foxes are, Master Harry! Well, you never thought to go fox-hunting this evening; but I call them foxes because the law won't let me call them by any other name; and she has gone down to the old goody Hardy, the blind woman, and to talk with her. Then she will have to read a chapter in the Bible, I warrant; so that she will just come back about this time, and then she will meet with the foxes; though, after all, they are waiting for Master Nicholas, the collector's clerk, I dare say; but they will never let her pass without inquiry."

While he spoke these wild and rambling words, he walked on rapidly, followed by Langford, who was now seriously alarmed; for, although what his companion poured forth was vague and incoherent, yet there were indications in it of something being really wrong, and of some danger menacing Alice Herbert. He remarked, too, that the half-witted man, as he walked along, frequently grasped the cudgel that he carried, and lifted it up slightly, as if to strike; but it was in vain that Langford tried to gain any clearer notion of what was amiss, for his questions met with no direct reply, his companion answering them constantly by some vague and irrelevant matter, and only hurrying his pace. Thus they proceeded through the wood that topped the bank over the stream, across a part of the manor park to a



spot where a belt of planting flanked the enclosed ground on the side farthest from the house and the village. It was separated by a high paling from a lane which ran along to some cottages at the foot of an upland common, and which lane itself was every here and there broken by a little irregular green, ornamented by high trees.

The ground around, indeed, seemed to have cut off from the park, and probably had been so in former times.

There was a small gate opened from the park into the lane at the distance of about a quarter of a mile from the spot at which Langford and his companion approached the paling, and at that hour of the evening they could discern the gate, with the path leading up to it; for, though the sun was just down, it was yet clear twilight. Towards that gate Silly John rapidly bent his steps; but they had not yet reached it when Langford suddenly heard a scream proceeding from the lane on his right hand, and apparently close to them. The memory of the ear is perhaps stronger and keener than that of the eye; and, though he had never heard that voice in any other pitch than that of calm and peaceful conversation, the distinctive tone was as discernible to the quick sense in the scream he now heard as it would have been had Alice Herbert simply called him by his name. He paused for no other indication; in a moment he was through the belt of planting; and, vaulting at a bound over the paling, he stood in one of the little greens we have mentioned, an unexpected intruder upon a party engaged in no very legitimate occupation.

On the sandy path which marked the passage of the lane across the green stood Alice Herbert, with a tall powerful man grasping her tightly by the right shoulder, and keeping the muzzle of a pistol to her temple, in order, apparently, to prevent her from screaming, while another was busily engaged in rifling her person of anything valuable she bore about her. So prompt and rapid had been the approach of Langford, that the two gentlemen of the road were quite taken unawares; and the one who held her was in the very act of vowing that he would blow her brains out if she uttered a word, when the muzzle of the pistol he held to her head was suddenly knocked up in the air by a blow from the unexpected intruder. The first impulse of the robber was

to pull the trigger, and the pistol went off, carrying the ball a foot or a foot and a half above the head of Alice Herbert.

Instantly letting go his grasp of the terrified girl, the man who had held her threw down the pistol and drew his sword upon his assailant. But Langford's blade was already in his hand, and his skill in the use of his weapon was remarkable; so that, in less than three passes, which took place with the speed of lightning, the robber's sword was wrenched from his grasp and flying among the boughs of the trees, while he himself, brought upon his knee, received a severe wound in his neck as he fell. At that moment, however, another terrified scream from the lips of Alice Herbert called her defender's attention; and, turning eagerly towards her, Langford at once perceived that it was for him, not for herself, that she was now alarmed. The robber whom he had seen engaged in rifling her of any little trinkets she bore about her had instantly abandoned that occupation on the sudden and unexpected attack upon his comrade, and was now advancing towards Langford, better prepared than the other had been, with his drawn sword in one hand and a pistol in the other. The moment which Langford had lost in turning towards Alice had been sufficient to enable the man whom he had disarmed to start upon his feet again, and to run to the spot where his sword fell; and the angler found that, in another instant, he should be opposed single-handed, and with nothing but his sword, to two strong and well-armed men. He did not easily, however, lose his presence of mind; and, seizing Alice Herbert's arm with his left hand, he gently drew her behind him, saying, "Crouch down low that you may not be hurt when they fire. I will defend you with my life."

Scarcely had he spoken, when the second ruffian deliberately presented the pistol at him, and fired. Langford felt that he was wounded in the left shoulder, and the blow of the bullet made him stagger; but, in the course of a soldier's life, he had been wounded before more than once, and, as far as he could judge, he was not now severely hurt.

His two assailants, however, were rushing fiercely upon him, and the odds seemed strong against him; but at that moment another arm, and a strong one, came in

aid of his own. His half-witted guide had by this time scrambled over the paling as well as his lameness would permit; and, with the cunning of madness, had crept quickly behind the two plunderers. As soon as he was within arm's length, which was but a moment after the shot was fired that wounded Langford in the shoulder, he waved his cudgel in the air, and struck the man who had discharged the pistol a blow on the back of the head, which laid him prostrate and stunned upon the ground.

Langford's quick eye instantly perceived the advantage, and he rushed forward, sword in hand, upon the other man. Finding, however, that the day was against them, the ruffian fled again after making an ineffectual effort to raise his companion; and, in a moment after, the sound of a horse's feet, as it galloped rapidly away, was heard in the road above.

"It is right that every man should have his nag," said the half-witted man, turning over the prostrate robber with his foot; "but thou wilt ride no more, Simpleton! I wonder if these clerks of St. Nicholas have lightened the burden of Master Nicholas, the clerk," he continued, turning as if to speak to him whom he had guided thither; but by this time Langford had returned to the spot where Alice Herbert stood; and, holding both her hands in his, was congratulating her upon her escape, with all those feelings sparkling forth from his eyes which might well arise from the situation in which he was placed, combined with all the thoughts and fancies which had lately been busy at his heart.

Alice looked up in his face with an expression that could not be mistaken. It was full of deep gratitude. Perhaps there might be something more in it, too; and, without listening much to vanity, he might have read it, "I would rather be thus protected by you than by any one I ever knew."

There are times and circumstances which draw two hearts together in a moment, which might otherwise have been long in finding each other out; and such were the times and circumstances in which they stood. She was very pale, however; and Langford was somewhat apprehensive, also, that the worthy personage who had galloped off might return with more of his fraternity; so that, after a few words of congratulation and assurance to Alice, he called to his half-witted companion,

"Come, John, come! Leave the scoundrel where he is; we have not time to make sure of him; and we had better get into the park and towards the manor as fast as possible."

Thus saying, he drew Alice's arm within his own, and led her on to the gate of the park, speaking eagerly to her of all that had occurred. The madman followed more slowly; but they had scarcely gone a hundred yards within the paling when Langford perceived that his fair companion was turning more and more pale every moment. Her eyelids, too, drooped heavily, and she said at length, in a low voice, "I am very faint." Scarcely had she spoken the words when he felt her beginning to sink, and, placing her upon a bank beneath one of the old trees of the park, he bade their crazy companion hasten as fast as possible to the house, and bring up some of the servants to assist in carrying their fair mistress home.

The man seemed to comprehend at once, and set off to obey; but Langford did not wait for the return of his messenger ere he endeavoured to recall Alice to herself. From a little brook which ran down towards the stream, he brought up some water in his hands, in order to sprinkle her face therewith; but, as he did so, something struck his eye which he had not perceived before, and which made his heart sink with sensations that he had never felt before, even in scenes of carnage and horror such as man seldom beholds. The sleeve of Alice Herbert's white dress on the right arm was dripping with blood, and Langford, in agony lest she should have sustained some injury, after casting the water in her face, tore her sleeve open to seek for the wound. No hurt was to be found, however; no blood was flowing down that fair smooth skin; the stains were less in the inside of her garment than on the out, and the blood which he now saw trickling down his own arm—the arm on which she had been leaning—so as to dabble the back of his hand, showed him whence that had proceeded which had stained her dress.

The cool air, the recumbent position, and the water he had thrown in her face, had by this time begun to recall Alice to consciousness; and the joy of seeing her recover, of finding that she was unhurt, and of having successfully defended her, threw Henry Langford off his guard, so far, at least, that he pressed a long kiss

on the fair hand he held fondly in his own. Alice's languid eyes met his as he raised his head, but there was a slight smile upon her lip, and he saw that he had not offended.

Her first faint words, as soon as she had sufficiently recovered herself to speak, were, "You are hurt! Oh, Captain Langford, I am sure you are very much hurt; and my being weak enough to faint when I found the blood trickling down my arm has delayed you but the longer in getting assistance. For Heaven's sake leave me here, and seek some one to attend to your wound as soon as you can. I shall be quite safe here. I have no fear now, but am only afraid that I cannot walk very fast; and, indeed, you should not be without help any longer."

Langford assured her that his wound was a trifle; that it was a mere nothing; that the blood he had lost could do him no injury. But Alice would not be satisfied; and, finding that Langford would not go without her, she insisted upon proceeding immediately. She trembled very much, and could walk but slowly; but she persevered in her determination, and had half crossed the park when they were met by Sir Walter himself and four or five of the servants. The feelings of the father at that moment may be conceived, but cannot be described: he threw his arms round his daughter, exclaiming, "My child, my dear child! But are you not hurt, my Alice? Yes, yes, you are! You are covered with blood!" and his own cheek grew deadly pale.

"It is his, my father," replied Alice, leaning upon Sir Walter's bosom, and holding out her hand to Langford: "I am quite unhurt, but he is wounded, and, I am afraid, seriously. He gave me his arm to help me home, and in a minute my whole sleeve was wet with blood. I was foolish enough to faint when I saw it, and that has made us longer; so pray let somebody look to his wound immediately."

All eyes were now turned upon Langford, and while Sir Walter hurried him and his daughter on to the Manor House, he loaded her deliverer with both thanks and inquiries. Langford assured him the wound that he had received was a mere trifle; that the ball had lodged in the flesh, and that he could move his arm nearly as well as ever; and then, to change the subject, he recounted to Sir Walter and Alice, as they went, how he had been

led to the spot where he had found her by the unfortunate half-witted man, John Graves.

"He shall wander about the world no more if I can provide him with a home," exclaimed Sir Walter, turning to look for the person of whom they spoke; but he was no longer with the party, and they could hear his voice in the woods at some distance, singing one of the old melodies of those times.

When they reached that door of the Manor House which opened into the park, Langford was about to take his leave, and go on to the village to seek for a surgeon. Alice cast down her eyes as he proposed to do so; but Sir Walter grasped him by the hand, and led him gently in, saying, "In no house but mine, Captain Langford! Do you think, after having received such an injury in defending my daughter, that we would trust you to the tendance of an inn?"

Langford made but slight opposition. If there had been hesitation in his mind and doubt at his heart when he had gone forth that afternoon to wander by the side of the stream, doubt and hesitation were by this time over; and, after a few commonplaces about giving trouble, he accepted Sir Walter's invitation, and became an inmate of one house with Alice Herbert.

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## CHAPTER VI.

WE must now return for a short space of time to the spot beneath the park wall where we left one of the assailants of Alice Herbert, stunned by a blow from the cudgel of John Graves. He lay there for some minutes perfectly motionless and perfectly alone. At length, however, the sound of a horse's feet was heard cantering lightly along the road, and a goodly gentleman, dressed in a fair suit of black, and mounted on a dun fat-backed mare, made his appearance in the lane, and approached rapidly towards the spot where the discomfited wayfarer lay.

The good round face of the new-comer was turned up towards the sky, calculating whether there was light enough left to let him get to Uppington in safety, or

whether he had not better pause and sleep at the little neighbouring town; and the first thing that called his attention to the object in his path was his dun mare, who had never before shied at anything on earth, recoiling from the body of the robber so violently as to throw forward the good round stomach of the rider upon her neck and shoulders with a sonorous ejaculation of the breath.

"Ugh! Gad's my life! whom have we here?" exclaimed Master Nicholas, the clerk of the collector at Uppington, whose saddlebags were, in truth, the tempting object which had brought forth the gentlemen of the road, when they had been unseasonably diverted from their purpose by the appearance of Alice Herbert: "Gad's my life! whom have we here?" and, dismounting from his mare with charitable intent, he bent down over the stranger.

There were two or three particulars in the sight that now presented itself which made the heart of the collector's clerk beat rather more rapidly than was ordinary. In the first place, the stranger had in his hand a drawn sword; in the next place, a discharged pistol might be seen lying within a foot of his nose; the sand was stained with blood hard by, and in the countenance of the prostrate man, the collector's clerk, who was a great physiognomist, discovered at once all the lines and features of a robber. The feelings of the good Samaritan vanished from his bosom as soon as he had made this discovery, and, stealthily creeping away as if afraid of waking a sleeping lion, the gentleman in black regained his mare's back, made her take a circuit round the little green, and riding on as hard as he could to the country town we have described in the commencement of this book, sent out a posse of people to apprehend the body of the stunned or defunct robber.

Before this detachment reached the spot, however, the personage it sought was gone. Shortly after the clerk had passed he had begun to recover, and speedily regained his legs, looking about him with some degree of wonder and amazement at the situation in which he found himself. While busy in recalling all that had passed, the sound of some one singing met his ear; and, in another minute, the head and shoulders of John Graves appeared above the park paling. The half-witted man saw that the robber was upon his feet again;

and, without any hesitation, he proceeded to clamber over the fence and approach his former antagonist.

"I have come to apprehend thee!" cried the madman, laying his hand boldly upon the collar of the robber's vest. Strange to say, the freebooter not only suffered him so to take hold of him, but very probably might have even gone with him, like a lamb to the slaughter—so much was he overpowered by surprise, and so little did he imagine that such an act would be performed without some power to support it—had not two or three horsemen at that moment come galloping down the lane as hard as they could ride. A single glance showed the captive of John Graves that there was an infinite accession of strength on his side. He accordingly twisted himself out of his mad antagonist's grasp in a moment, and prepared to lay violent hands upon him in return.

Silly John, however, seemed by this time entirely to have forgotten his purpose of arresting the robber; and looking round him as the others came up, with an air of wonder indeed, but not of alarm, he muttered, "More foxes! more foxes!"

The worthies by whom he was surrounded in the mean time held a sharp consultation, of which he seemed to be the object; but, at length, one of them exclaimed, "Come along, come along! Bring him with you, and do what you like with him afterward. If you stay disputing here, you will have the whole country upon you."

After a moment's hesitation, the plan proposed was adopted, and two of the robbers, seizing upon John Graves, dragged him along between them at a much quicker rate of progression than was at all agreeable to him. After the first ten or twelve steps he resisted strenuously, and showed a disposition to be vociferous, which instantly produced the application of a pistol to his head, with a threat of death if he did not keep silence. He was quite sufficiently sane to fear the fate that menaced him; and the sight of the pistol had an immediate effect both upon his tongue and his feet, which now moved rapidly onward. The paths pursued by his captors were as tortuous as might well be, and the lane which had been the scene of their exploits was left almost immediately. For nearly an hour they hastened on as fast as they could drag the half-witted man along;



but, at length, much to his relief, the whole party stopped before a small lonely house on the edge of a wide common. There was a tall pole, with a garland at the top, planted before the door; and a bush hung above the lintel, giving notice to all whom it might concern that entertainment for man, at least, was to be found within. The sound of the strangers' coming in a moment drew out the landlord of the place, who seemed not at all surprised to see the company which visited his house at that late hour; and his own pale brown countenance bore, in its hawklike features, an expression very harmonious with the calling of his guests.

"Quick! take the horses up to the pits," he said, speaking to the boy of all work who appeared round the corner; and shading the candle which he carried in his hand from the wind, "Why, Master Hardie, whom have you got there? By my life, it is Silly John! What, in the devil's name, did you bring him here for?"

"Why, Master Guilford," replied one of the men, but not him to whom he spoke, "here Hardie and Wiley have got themselves into a pretty mess. They would go out against the captain's orders to try a bit of business on a private account, and they have got more than they bargained for, I take it. Here is Hardie with a cut in his neck, which has made him bleed like an old sow pig; and Wiley was left for dead by a blow of this same fellow's cudgel whom we have got here. Hardie came up for us two upon the downs, or else it is likely Wiley would have been in the pepper-pot at Uppington by this time, for we caught his horse half a mile up the green lane."

This conversation had taken place while the party was alighting; but, no sooner was that operation concluded, than the landlord pressed them to come in quickly, and Silly John was hurried by them into a large room behind, with a long deal table, and several settles and benches for its sole furniture, if we except a polished sconce over the chimney, from which a single candle shed its dim and flickering rays. Underneath the light, with his two arms leaning on the table, and his head resting again upon them, the curls of the fair hair falling over the sleeves of his coat, and his face hidden entirely, sat the boy Jocelyn, whom we have before mentioned; and the gang of plunderers had been in the room several minutes before he was aware of

their presence, so sound was the slumber in which he was buried.

"Hark ye, Master Doveton!" said the landlord, as soon as the door was shut, and addressing the man who had given him an account of his companions' adventure; "hark ye! I think it a very silly thing of you to bring this fellow up here."

"Why, we did not know what else to do with him, Guilford," answered the other. "Wiley wanted to shoot him as soon as he heard that it was his cudgel which had beaten about his head so foully."

"You shall do no harm to him in my house, Master Doveton," replied the other; "the man is a poor innocent whom I have known this many a year, and I won't have him hurt."

"Thank you, Master Guilford, thank you!" exclaimed the poor fellow, as he heard this interposition in his favour. "These foxes have almost twisted my thumbs off. Do not let them hurt me, Master Guilford, and I'll give you the crooked sixpence out of my tobacco-box."

"You see, Guilford," replied Doveton, while one or two others crowded round to hear the consultation, "the thing is, we risk this fellow betraying us. He has seen all our faces, and could, I dare say, swear to us anywhere."

"What signifies *his* swearing?" demanded the landlord; "he is mad as a March hare; nobody will believe his swearing."

"Ay, but he may give such information as will lead them to ferret us out," replied another of the gang: "now we do not want to hurt the man, but he must be got out of the way somehow."

"He sha'n't be got out of the way by foul means, howsoever, Master Doveton," replied the landlord, whose new character of protector was pleasant to him. "Come, nonsense! make him sit down and drink with you, and he'll forget all about it. He'll sing you as good a song as any man in the country; and if he promises not to tell anything he has seen, you may be quite sure of him."

"Truth, truth! Master Guilford," cried the object of their discourse. "If my godfathers and godmothers at my baptism had known what they were about, they would have called me Truth. Why not Truth as well as Ruth? I had a sister they called Ruth, though she

never found out a Boaz, poor girl! but died without being a widow; how could she, when she was never married? If I had been married to Margaret Johnson myself, I should not have gone mad, you know: but I always tell truth. Did anybody ever hear me tell a lie in my life?"

So he rambled on, while the friendly landlord busied himself in setting out, hastily, the table in the midst for the coming entertainment of his worthy guests; and, at the same time, lent a sharp ear to the consultation which they held together concerning the madman. That consultation was not of a nature to satisfy him entirely; for, though it seemed that the party were willing to follow his counsel so far as keeping poor Silly John to drink with them, a word or two was spoken of its being easy to do what they liked with him when he was drunk, which did not at all please Master Guilford.

As he went round and round the table, however, setting down a cup here and a platter there, he gave the boy Jocelyn a sharp knock on the elbow, which roused him from his sleep; and, the next time he passed, the landlord whispered a word in his ear. The boy took no particular notice at the moment, but rubbed his eyes, yawned, spoke for a moment to Doveton and the rest, and then disappeared from the room.

Large joints of roast meat soon graced the board, and the hall assumed very much the appearance of the palace of Ulysses in the days of the suiters; except that, in all probability, it was a little more cleanly, and that the beef was not killed at the end of the table. Silly John was made to sit down between the two men, Hardcastle and Wiley, who were certainly not his greatest friends; but they nevertheless loaded his platter with food, which he devoured with a wonderful appetite, and filled his cup with ale from a tankard called a black jack, which circulated freely till supper was over.

The gentlemen into whose society he was thrown, however, were not of a class to rest satisfied with even the best old humming ale; and, while one body of them demanded the implements and materials for making punch, another called for a pitcher of Burgundy, which, notwithstanding the size, character, and appearance of the house, was produced as a matter of course. John Graves had his ladleful from the bowl and his glassful

from the pitcher; and Doveton, who was beginning to get merry, and eke good-humoured in his cups, insisted upon having one of the songs the landlord had so much vaunted. The madman required no pressing; the very name of music was enough for him; and with a full sonorous voice, and memory which failed not in the slightest particular, he began an old song, one of the many in praise of punch.

"Now I will sing you a song in return, Master John," cried the rough-featured fellow called Hardcastle, who had been one of the assailants of Alice Herbert.

"Why, Hardie, thou canst never sing to-night," replied Doveton. "Thou canst never sing to-night, with the slit in the weasand thou hast got down there. It will let all the wind out, and thy song will be like the song of a broken bellows or bursten bagpipe."

"Never you mind that, Doveton," replied the other; "my song shall be sung if the devil and you stand at the door together; a pretty pair of you!" and he accordingly proceeded to pour forth, in a voice of goodly power, but very inferior in melody to that of the madman, a song well suited to the taste of his auditors:—

#### THE WATERY MOON.

The wat'ry moon is in the sky,  
Looking all dim and pale on high;  
And the traveller gazes with anxious eye,  
And thinks it will raise full soon:  
And he draws his cloak around him tight,  
But if I be not mistaken quite,  
He will open that cloak again to-night  
Beneath the wat'ry moon.

The wat'ry moon is sinking low,  
The traveller's beast is dull and slow,  
And neither word, nor spur, nor blow  
Will bring him sooner boon.  
But the saddlebags are heavy and full,  
And all too much for a beast so dull,  
Up this steep shady hill to pull,  
Beneath the wat'ry moon.

The wat'ry moon is gone to bed;  
The traveller on his way has sped;  
The horse seems lighter the road to tread,  
And he'll be home very soon:  
But with a young man he met on the hill,  
Who lighten'd his load with right good-will,  
Hoping often to show the same kindness still,  
Beneath the wat'ry moon.

Scarcely had Wardcastle done his song, amid great applause on the part of his companions, when a step was heard in the neighbouring passage which made the whole party start and look in each other's faces. The next moment, however, the door was opened, and the personage of whom we have already spoken more than once, under the title of Franklin Gray, stood among them. It was very clear that he was an unexpected, and not a very welcome guest at that moment; but, at the same time, the whole of the fraternity who occupied the hall immediately put on the most agreeable look in the world, and strove to appear delighted with his coming. His brow was somewhat cloudy, indeed, but his bearing was frank and straightforward; and sitting down in a chair which had been placed for him with busy haste by the others, he fixed his eyes sternly upon the man who had suffered from the cudgel of Silly John, demanding, "What is all this I hear, Wiley?"

The personage he spoke to hesitated to reply, bit his lip, tried to frown and to toss his head; and, before he had made up his mind what to say upon the occasion, the one who had been called Doveton answered for him.

"I believe, captain," he said, "the best way when one has been in the wrong is to own it, and to tell the truth. Now we have all, more or less, been wrong, I believe. Wiley, there, heard that Master Nicholas, the clerk of the collector at Uppington, was coming along the green lane this evening with all the receipts; and he thought it would be a good sweep for us all if we could get the bags. He asked us all to go, but only Wardcastle would have a hand in it, though the rest of us promised to exercise our horses upon the hill above, and come down if they were likely to be caught. Well, they fell in with a young lady first, and they thought they might as well have her purse too—"

Franklin Gray set his teeth hard, but said nothing; and Doveton, who saw the expression on the other's face, went on. "It was very wrong, I know, Captain Gray; quite contrary to your orders to do anything of the kind; and more especially to attack a woman, which you spoke of the other day. But, however, temptation, you know, captain; temptation will get the better of us all at times. As I was saying, however, some one came to help the lady with this poor silly fel-

low; and Hardcastle got a cut in his neck that won't be well this ten days, and Wiley a broken head, which, I hope, will teach him better manners for the rest of his life."

The brow of Franklin Gray never relaxed its heavy frown except at the moment when Doveton announced the corporeal evils which had befallen the two adventurers as a reward for their disobedience; and then a grim smile for a moment curled his lip. It passed away, however, instantly, and he demanded, looking at Wiley, "Do you know who it was that came to the lady's help?"

"Oh! I marked him well enough," replied Wiley. "I shall not forget him; and, if ever the time comes—" The rest of the sentence was lost between his teeth; but he went on in a louder tone immediately after, adding, "He is one of your good friends, Captain Gray. I have seen you walking with him twice; and I think he might have known better than interrupt a gentleman in his occupations. We should not have hurt the young woman! What business was it of his?"

"The only pity is," said Franklin Gray, coolly, "that he did not send a bullet through your head."

"He has got one in his own shoulder," said Wiley, doggedly; "for I saw the ball strike, and I hope it may do for him."

"If he chance to die of it," said Gray, in the same calm, stern tone, "I will blow your brains out! Remember what I say, Master Wiley: you know me! Nay, a word more. When we joined together and came down here, it was for a particular purpose, and you all swore an oath to obey my directions, and submit to my laws for the next three months. You and Hardcastle have scarcely been a fortnight with me, but you break your oath; and when I especially told you not to enter into any petty enterprise, because we had a greater in hand which you would ruin if you did, you go and disgrace yourself by attacking a girl. Now it seems that you have received some punishment in the very act, and, therefore, I shall inflict no other; but be warned, both of you! I am not a man to be trifled with; and if once more either of you disobey, be sure that I will then be as severe as I am now lenient. Can any one tell," he continued, "who the lady was that was attacked

by them ! I can only suppose that it was old Sir Walter's daughter."

"Just so ! just so !" cried Silly John Graves from the other end of the table ; " it was pretty Mistress Alice Herbert, and good Mrs. Alice Herbert too, which is better than pretty : and you, too, seem to be good, which is better than brave ; very good, indeed, for a fox and a leader of foxes. I vow and protest you have read them a homily as fair as any in the book ; and now, pray let me go, for I have sung them a song such as they won't hear again in a hurry."

"Why have you brought him hither !" continued Franklin Gray, in a sharp tone, without making any reply to John Graves's observation. " Was it to end folly by madness, and conclude your own disobedience by ensuring its own punishment !"

It took some time to explain to the leader of the band the motives which had induced them to bring the half-witted fellow up thither, and how he had been found busy in the laudable occupation of arresting Wiley when the rest of the party came to the rescue.

"And therefore," exclaimed Gray, interrupting the speaker, "because he was likely to recognise Wiley, and bring him to the gallows, Master Wiley persuaded you to drag him up here, that he may recognise us all, and bring us to Tyburn along with him. It was worthy of you, Master Wiley."

"You are wrong for once, captain," said Wiley ; "if I had had any of my wits, I would have taken care that he should recognise no one. Dead men tell no tales, I said then, and I say so still."

"They tell tales that are heard long years after !" replied Franklin Gray, with melancholy sternness. "Ay ! and often, when time has flown, and the hot blood has become cool, and the black hair gray, and the strong limbs feeble, and easy competence has soothed regret, and either penitence or pleasure has stilled remorse ; I tell ye, my masters, that often then, in the hour of security, and tranquillity, and luxury, the avenger of blood needlessly spilled—the avenger, who has slept so long—will awaken, and the merest accident bring forth proof fit to lead us to shame, and condemnation, and death. No, no ! I will deal with this man ; but I must first go forth and ascertain what are likely to be the consequences of this act of folly. In the mean time, Harvey

I leave him under your charge! See that no evil befall him, and keep as quiet as may be. No roaring, no singing, mark me! and, if possible, abstain from drink."

Thus saying, he left them, but returned much sooner than they had expected; and, when he appeared, was evidently much moved. His dark brow was gathered into angry frowns, and his bright eye flashed in a manner which made those who knew him best augur some sudden violence. He sat down at the table, however, and remained for a moment in silence, with his brow leaning upon his hand.

"I am foolish enough," he said, at length, "to follow the weak custom of the world, and be more angry at the bad consequences of an evil act than I was at the act itself: but I will not yield to such folly. What think ye, sirs? I find that the whole county is already in a stir against us on this bad business. There have been large parties of men from Uppington scouring the lanes in every direction. Messengers have been sent out from the manor to call a general meeting of the magistrates for to-morrow. There is foolish Thomas Waller, and silly Matthew Scrope, and all the men who are likely to be most active and violent against us, called to consult at the Talbot; and nothing is to be done but for each one of us to take his own way out of the county till the storm has blown over. Let us all meet this day week at Ashby. That is seventy miles off; and we can there see how to pass the time till we can return here, and pursue our great enterprise in safety. But one word more. We are all men of honour; and, if any of us should chance to fall into the hands of the enemy, we can die in silence: that is enough."

"[But what is to be done with him?]" demanded one or two of the fraternity, pointing to the unhappy lunatic; while, at the same time, some of the others came forward and whispered to their captain, apparently on the same subject, with somewhat sinister looks. But Gray replied, sternly, "No! I say no! Leave him to me: I know him well, and he may be trusted. I shall remain a day, or perhaps two, behind you. Now to horse and depart, but one by one."

The tone in which he spoke courted no reply; and the band left the room, every man according to his own peculiar manner of doing such things: for there is as much art in leaving a room as in entering one, though



the first is much more important as an evolution. However, one walked straight out, without saying a word to anybody; one spoke for a few minutes with a companion, and then, suddenly turning, passed through the door; one entered into a conspiracy with another, to go out conversing with each other; one stayed a moment to empty the remains of the tankard into a large cup, and drink it off at a draught; and another (Dove-ton) went up to Gray, shook him by the hand, wished him well, and told him he was very sorry that he had even connived at Wiley's scheme. The last was the only one who, in fact, suffered to appear the feelings which affected all the others, and embarrassed them in their exits. They all felt they had been wrong, with the exception of him who emptied the tankard; they all felt that Gray had just cause to be angry and indignant; but one feeling or another—pride, vanity, shyness, and many others—keep nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of a thousand from opening their lips under such circumstances. It is only the thousandth who candidly and straightforwardly walks up to the truth, and says, "I am sorry I have done wrong."

At length the room was left untenanted by any but Franklin Gray and his half-witted companion, who sat twirling his thumbs at the table, apparently lost to the recollection of what was passing around him. He was roused, however, by the voice of Gray pronouncing his name, and found the keen dark eye of the robber fixed intently upon him.

"John Graves," said Gray, "do you know what those men pray me to do with you? They say that, if I let you go, you will betray what you have seen this night, lead people to the places where we meet, or give evidence against us if ever we are in trouble; and they say that the only way is to silence your tongue for ever."

"No, no, no!" cried the poor man, fully awakened to his situation by such words; "pray don't! pray don't! I will never tell anything about it, as I hope for God's mercy, and that he will restore my wits in another world. Wits? I have not got wits enough to tell anything: besides, I won't, indeed I won't."

"If you will swear," said Gray, "by all you hold dear, never to tell any one what you have seen to-night; never to point any one of us out, by word, or look, or ges-

ture, as men you have seen do this or that; never to lead any one to this place as our place of meeting—”

“I will! I do!” cried the madman, solemnly; “I will betray you in no respect.”

“So far, so good,” answered Gray; “but that is not all I give you your life when every voice among us but my own was for taking it; and with it you must promise, if ever I call upon you, to do me a piece of service.”

The other gazed earnestly in his face; seeming, by a painful effort, to gather together all his remaining fragments of mind, to cope with one who, he feared, was trying to lead him astray by the bribe of life. “What is it,” he demanded, “what is it I am to do? I will break none of the commandments. I will neither rob nor murder, nor help to rob or murder. Ah, man! remember, though perhaps I am crazy, as people say, I have a soul to be saved as well as others. If it must be, I will die sooner than do these things.”

“I require no such things at your hands,” replied Gray, moved a good deal by his companion’s earnestness. “I may only require you to guide me on my way in a moment of difficulty; to lead me by the paths which, I am told, no one knows so well as you do; and, perhaps, to guide me into a house—”

“Not to take other men’s goods!” cried Graves. “No, never! Guide you I will in moments of difficulty; lead you I will when you want it; but not to commit a crime, for then I am a sharer.”

“What I shall ask you,” said Gray, solemnly, “is to commit no crime. My purpose shall be to take no man’s goods from him, but rather to restore to him who is deprived of it that which is his own.”

“Swear to me that!” exclaimed the other, “and I will lead you anywhere.”

“I swear it now!” answered Gray; “and remember that, having sworn it, I shall never ask you to do anything but that which you now agree to do, and in consideration of which I give you your life. No questions, therefore, hereafter, even were I to ask you to lead me into the heart of Danemore Castle.”

The madman laughed loud. “There should be none!” he answered, “for I know why you go.”

“Indeed!” said Gray, with a smile: “but it is enough that you are willing. I trust to your word in every-

thing, and doubt not that you will keep it to the letter. Hast thou any money, poor fellow ?”

“Nothing but my crooked sixpence in my tobacco-box,” replied the man, looking ruefully in his interrogator’s face. “Pray, do not take that from me : it and I are old friends.”

“I would rather give than take from thee,” replied his companion. “There is a guinea to keep thee warm ; and now thou art at liberty to go : so fare thee well.”

As he said this he turned away and left the room ; and poor Silly John continued gazing upon the gold piece in his palm with evident delight, though he held some curious consultations with himself regarding the lawfulness of taking money from such hands as those which had bestowed it. In those consultations much shrewd casuistry was mingled with much simple folly ; but, in the end, the counsel for the defence, as usual, got the better, and he slipped the gold piece into his pouch, chuckling. He then crept quietly out of the inn ; and, although it may seem strange to attach ourselves so particularly to a personage of the class and character of Silly John, yet must we, nevertheless, follow him a little farther in his wanderings.

By the time that all this had passed, it was near midnight ; and, instead of taking his way back to the little town of Moorhurst, the half-witted man walked on, with his peculiar halting gait, towards the high dim moors that might be seen rising dark and wild against the moonlight sky, like the gloomy track of difficulties and dangers which we too often find in life lying between us and the brighter region, lighted up by hope, beyond. On the edge of the moor was a low shed and a stack of fern, which the poor fellow must have remarked in some of his previous peregrinations ; for towards these he directed his steps at once, pulled down a large quantity of the dry leaves, dragged them into the shed, and, having piled them up in a corner, nestled down therein, though not without having addressed a prayer and a thanksgiving towards the God whom, in all his madness, he never forgot. We will not inquire whether the act of adoration was couched in wild and wandering terms ; whether it was connected or broken, reasonable or distracted : it was from the heart, and we are sure it was accepted.

By daylight he was upon his way, and an hour's walk brought him into the deep woods that backed the splendid dwelling of Lord Harold and his father, which was known in the country by the name of *The Casile*, for very few of the good folks round had ever seen any other building of the kind, and it was therefore *their castle* par excellence. It was by the back way that Silly John now approached the mansion, seeming quite familiar with all the roads and paths about the place; but, before he reached the spot where the wood, cut away, afforded an open space, in which were erected the principal offices, he was met by a person, at the sight of whom he bent down his head, and glanced furtively up with his eye, like a dog who does not very well know whether it will be kicked or caressed.

The figure that approached him in the long dim walk was that of a tall thin woman, of perhaps fifty years of age, dressed in dark-coloured garments, exceedingly full and ample, with a sort of shawl of fine white lace pinned across her shoulders; while over a broad white coif, which she wore upon her head, was a black veil drawn close, and crossing under the chin. Her features were high and sharp; her eyes fine, and fringed with long black eyelashes; her lips thin and pale; her teeth very white; and her complexion, which must have been originally dark and troubled, now sallow, without the slightest trace of red in any part of the cheek. She did not frown; but there was a cold calmness about her compressed lips and tight-set teeth, and a piercing sharpness about her clear black eye, which rendered the whole expression harsh and forbidding. Although past the usual period of grace, yet she walked gracefully and with dignity, and bore every trace of having been a very handsome woman, though it was impossible to conceive that she had ever been a very pleasing one.

From the moment she saw him, her eye remained fixed upon Silly John steadfastly, but not sternly; and he advanced towards her crouching, as we have said, and sidling with a degree of awe which he would not have shown to the highest monarch on the earth from any reverence for mere external rank. But the sharp and seemingly cold decision of her character was exactly that which most strongly affects people in his situation; and "Mistress Bertha, the housekeeper of Danemore Castle," the servants used to declare, "could

always make silly John Graves in his senses when she pleased." Although no smile curled her lip, and her countenance underwent no change, the tone of her voice, while she spoke the first few words to him, at once showed the half-witted man that he was not out of favour.

"Why, how is it, John," she asked, speaking with a very slight foreign accent; "how is it that you have not been up at the castle for these six weeks?"

"Because I got my fill at the town and the manor, Mistress Bertha," replied the other.

"Ay, that is it!" she exclaimed; "that is it. If every one would but say it. Men go for what they can get; and when they can get their fill at one place, they seek not another. The only difference between madmen and the world is, that madmen tell the truth and the world conceals it."

"I always tell the truth," cried the half-witted man, caught by the sound of a word connected with one of his rooted ideas; "I always tell the truth; do not I, Mistress Bertha?"

"Yes; but you are only half mad," answered the housekeeper; "for you can sometimes conceal it too. But go in, John; go into the castle; and, if you go along the long back corridor below, you will find my little maid in the room at the end. Bid her give you the cold meat that Lord Harold left after his breakfast."

"After his breakfast!" cried the half-witted man. "He has breakfasted mighty early! But now—oh, I guess it; he has gone to London. I heard her tell him to go."

"Heard who tell him?" demanded Mistress Bertha, with an air of some surprise.

"Why, pretty Mistress Alice Herbert, to be sure," replied the other. "Did not I hear all they said as they came down the walk and through the woods?"

"Nay, then," said the housekeeper, smiling, as far as she was ever known to smile, "I suppose he is gone to buy the wedding ring, and have the marriage settlements drawn up. Methinks he might have told me too."

"Nay, Mistress Bertha," replied the other, "no wedding rings! no marriage settlements! Mistress Alice is not for him!"

A slight flush came over the pale cheek of her to

whom he spoke. "Not for him!" she exclaimed; "not for him! Does she refuse him, then?"

"Yes, to be sure," replied John Graves; "every man is refused once in his life. I was refused myself, for that matter; but I was wise, and resolved that I would never be refused again."

"Art thou lying or art thou speaking truth?" demanded Mistress Bertha, fixing her eyes sternly upon him. "Did she refuse him?"

"Truth!" replied the man: "I always speak truth! She refused him as sure as I am alive: nothing he could say would move her. I knew it very well, and I told him so before; but he would not believe me."

Bertha stood and gazed upon the ground for several minutes. "I do believe," she said, speaking to herself, "I do believe that things possessed without right have a doom upon them, which prevents them from bringing happiness even to those who hold them, unconscious of holding them wrongly. Now is this poor boy, notwithstanding all his great wealth and high expectations, destined to be crossed in this long-cherished love, which was to make both himself and his father so happy! Poor youth! how long and deeply he has loved her! How his heart must have ached when I talked about her this morning! and shall I help to take from him anything he possesses?"

"We ought always to do what is right, Mistress Bertha," exclaimed the half-witted man, whose presence she had totally forgotten. "And both you and I know that right has not always been done."

"Out upon the fool!" exclaimed the housekeeper. "Hold thy mad tongue! How darest thou to prate of right and wrong, not having wit to keep thee from running thy head against a post! Get thee in before me! Thou shalt give the earl an account of this refusal!"

John Graves slunk away before her flashing eye and angry words like a cowed dog, looking ever and anon to the right and left as if for some means to escape; but she kept him in view, following close upon his steps till they both entered the large mansion before them.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE injury which Henry Langford had received was more severe than he had at first imagined. The extraction of the ball was very painful, and so much inflammation succeeded that he was confined to his room for several days. The delay and restraint in truth annoyed him as much as the pain and restlessness which he suffered, for at that time there were various important objects before him which he was prevented from pursuing with the calm but rapid energy of his character. He had one great consolation, however, that the injury he had sustained was received in defence of Alice Herbert; he had one great pleasure in the midst of his sufferings, to feel sure that she was thinking of him, and thinking of him with interest. Alice Herbert did not attend him as a lady of romance; she did not dress his wounds or sing to lull him to repose. She did not even show him that care and attention, visiting his sick chamber often in the day, making cooling drinks with her own hand, and pressing him to take care of himself, and to follow exactly the surgeon's directions, which many a lady of that very age would have done. Nay, more, strange as it may seem, she did not display half so much interest towards him as she might have done towards any person in whom she was not so deeply interested. She took care, indeed, that everything should be done for his comfort and convenience; but she did so seeming to do it as little as possible. She did give up every thought to him, and to how he might be best brought back to health, especially during the first three days, while the surgeon shook his grave and not very sapient head, and declared that the result was doubtful; but she took great care that nobody should know that her thoughts were so employed.

When at length he was permitted to leave his room, she received him with a degree of timidity that was not without its share of tenderness. It seemed as if she felt that towards him she was placed in a different relationship from that in which she stood towards any other human being, and the feeling was strange and

new to her, but it was not without its pleasure. Langford's manner, too, soon dispelled everything that was in the least embarrassing in such feelings, and left them all their delight.

With fever and loss of blood he had been greatly weakened, and there was a degree of languor in his conversation during the first two or three days which rendered it to Alice Herbert perhaps more interesting even than it had been before. It was still bright and sparkling; it was still rich and deep; but there was a softness, a gentleness in it, which was the more winning from the contrast between the power of the thought and the mildness of the manner. The mind of Alice, too, had undergone some change, from what reason she scarcely knew. She was becoming fonder of grave thoughts; she was more pensive; and once or twice, even when she was alone, she blushed deeply at finding herself guilty of some little act of absence of mind, a thing she never had accused herself of before. She blushed because she was conscious that on these occasions she was thinking of Henry Langford; her meditations, indeed, were such as she needed not to have blushed for; they were all pure, and upright, and good; but it was for their intensity that she blushed, not for the matter of them.

There was in Langford's manner towards her, however, a tenderness, a gentleness, an appealingness, if we may use the term, which, without words, very soon told her, that if she thought deeply of him, he thought no less deeply of her. Her father was about this time a good deal absent from home; for the attack upon his daughter, at the very gates of his own park, had raised his indignation to a high pitch; and he declared that he would not rest, night or day, till he had rooted out of the country the band of villains who deprived it of its ancient peace and security. Meetings of the justices in the neighbourhood were accordingly held for the purpose of causing the apprehension of the offenders; and at all these Sir Walter, who was himself an active though kindly magistrate, was present, taking a prominent part; so that, as we have said, he was much absent from home, and Alice Herbert was left not alone, but in company with Henry Langford.

Such circumstances seldom lead but to one result, and must have done so now, had not that result been



long before reached by the heart of each. Langford, however, was extremely careful: he could not, indeed, so far govern his manner as to prevent it from betraying the growing tenderness, the daily increasing love that he felt towards Alice Herbert; but not a word ever escaped his lips to confirm what his manner told unwittingly. They spoke of all the various matters, on all the multitude of themes which are to be found in the treasury of rich and well-cultivated minds; there was not one fine subject in all the mighty universe, there was not an object in all the tide of bright and beautiful things, which the God of Nature has poured through every channel of the immense creation, that might not become for them a topic of discourse, for in all they could find sources for enjoyment and admiration.

And thus they went on conversing upon indifferent things, deriving amusement and instruction, and employment for imagination from all. Yes! conversing of indifferent things, but conversing as people who were not indifferent to each other; speaking of matters which had no reference to themselves, yet each learning as they spoke but the more to admire, to esteem, to love the other.

There were looks, too—unintentional looks—that betrayed the secrets of the heart more than words. When Alice Herbert's eyes were turned away, Langford would gaze at her with long and tender earnestness till she turned towards him, and then would immediately withdraw his eyes. But still, more than once, she caught those eyes fixed upon her, and felt sure that they had been so gazing long. She, too, while working or drawing, and conversing at the same time on any passing subject that was before them, would occasionally, when his rich eloquence poured forth in a current of more than ordinary brightness, raise her eyes to his face with a look of deep eagerness which made his very heart thrill.

Thus it went on, as might be naturally expected, and, before three weeks were over, Alice Herbert found that there was but one happiness for her on earth; and Henry Langford knew that his fate was decided, as far as intense, and true, and ardent love decides, for weal or wo, the fate of every man capable of feeling it.

For the last two or three days, however, Alice had

remarked that he was more thoughtful, perhaps more grave than usual. The magisterial labours of her father were now nearly at an end. Though none of the offenders had been taken, he had satisfied himself that their bad neighbours had been driven from the vicinity; and two or three daring robberies, which were committed about this time in the next county but one, confirmed him in the belief. He was, therefore, much more at home with Alice and with him whom we may now call her lover, and the delight which he took in Langford's society was every day more and more apparent, and every day more sweet and reassuring to his daughter's heart. The regard of the old man and the young man was evidently reciprocal, for Langford was one of those who could feel and estimate to the full the beautiful and natural simplicity, the straightforward single-mindedness of the old knight of Moorhurst.

However, during the two or three days which we have just mentioned as having displayed an unusual degree of gravity in Langford's manner, his eyes would often rest with a sort of doubtful and inquiring look upon the face of Sir Walter; and Alice also fancied that her father was pale, thoughtful, and uneasy. Langford, too, though scarcely fully recovered, had been out several times alone, pleading urgent business; and, in short, it was clear, that in the bosoms of many of the party tenantry the Manor House there were busy thoughts, which for some reason they concealed from each other.

Such was the state of things just three weeks after the affray with the robbers; when one evening Alice had walked out alone, in order to think over all that she felt and all that she had remarked, without having her thoughts interrupted even by the conversation of those who were the objects of her meditation. She had now learned not to go very far from the house when alone, and she sat down for a moment in a seat at the end of the bowling-green, which was a small oblong piece of ground, hollowed out between high banks on every side, which banks, like the flat little lawn that they surrounded, were covered with smooth green turf, and were surmounted on three sides by a range of fine yew-trees, cut with exact precision into the form of a high wall. Her father, before she left the house, had seated himself in his armchair in the library to take the afternoon

nap in which he sometimes indulged; and Langford, whom she had not seen for nearly an hour, she believed to have gone to the village.

It was not so, however; and, ere she had remained long in that spot, thinking over her situation, and somewhat schooling herself for feelings which she could not suppress, she heard a rapid footfall coming from the direction of the house; and the thrill that went through her heart, the agitation that took possession of her whole frame, showed the quick memory of love. Had she yielded to her first impulse, though there was no one upon earth in whose society she felt so happy as in that of the person who now sought her, she would have risen and made her escape through the trees behind her. She restrained herself, however, and sat still, with a beating heart indeed, and with her breath almost suppressed, while Langford, with a quick step, crossed the bowling-green and approached her. Although she strove to do so, although she would have given worlds to appear unconcerned, she could not raise her eyes to welcome the visiter with her usual smile, and she suffered him to traverse the whole open space as if she had not seen him, only looking up with a glance of consciousness and a deep blush when he came close to her.

Langford was agitated too, but the agitation showed itself merely in a great degree of paleness. His step was firm, his manner was calm and decided.

"I have sought you," he said, as he came up; "I saw you go away from the house, and thought you had gone to the flower-garden."

Alice strove hard to reply as usual, but all that she could say was, "I thought it would be cooler here;" and there it stopped: she could go no farther.

"We shall be less likely to be interrupted, too," replied Langford; "and that, with me, is a great object at the present moment, for I wish much to speak with you; to detain you for half an hour; nay, perhaps, for a whole hour with me alone."

Alice could now reply nothing indeed; but with her eyes bent down, and the tears ready to rise up in them, she suffered Langford to take her hand and to proceed.

He seldom did anything like other men, acting upon principles which we may hereafter pause upon for a moment; and he did not now come at once to the declaration

which Alice felt was hanging upon his lips, but went on to speak of things apparently of far less interest. "You will give me this half hour or this hour, I know, sweet lady; and afterward you shall give me more or not, as you please. I had some idea of detaining you before you went out; but I am glad I did not, because I think, when one has anything of great importance to say—anything, I mean, which deeply interests and moves us, in which the whole feelings of our hearts are engaged—I think that there is no place we can so well choose as in the face of Nature, under the free canopy of heaven. One's spirit feels confined and crushed in chambers built by hands; one's heart has not room to expand; one's soul has not space to breathe forth at liberty."

He saw that by this time Alice's emotion had a little subsided; she had even ventured at the last words to look up in his face; and he now went on, coming nearer to the matter of his thoughts. "Alice," he said, "dear Alice, I would beseech you not to agitate yourself, and yet I must speak to you on subjects which will create much emotion."

Did Alice think, even for a moment, that he was too confident, that he was too sure of possessing such great influence over her mind? She did not; but, even if such an idea had presented itself for a moment, it would have been done away immediately, for he went on. "I know that I must greatly agitate and move you; for if my brightest and dearest hopes are true, that heart is too deep and too intense in all its feelings not to be agitated by the words you must hear and the words you must speak; and if those hopes are not true; if, like so many other of life's illusions, they have given me a moment of brightness but to plunge me in the deeper night, that heart is too gentle and too kind to tell me that the whole of the rest of my life is misery without feeling wrung and pained. Alice, I have sought you, not to tell you that I love you, for that you must have known long—"

"Oh no!" she cried, suddenly looking up through a flood of bright and happy tears, "oh no! I might think so, but I could not be sure of it!"

Langford smiled and pressed her hand to his lips. "Do not think me presumptuous," he answered; "do not think me presumptuous when I say that those words and that look have already given a reply, and made me most happy. Oh no, I am not presumptuous, for I

know Alice Herbert too well not to feel that such words and such a look may well spare my agitating her farther on one subject at least. Yet tell me, Alice, am I as happy as I dream myself to be?"

For a moment she made him no answer, and he added, "Oh speak!"

"What can I say, Langford?" she murmured, in a low voice; "you, who know the human heart so well, must have read mine perhaps too deeply."

He gave up a few moments to thanks and to expressions of his joy; but after that a graver shade came upon his countenance, and he said, "There is much, much, my beloved, to be spoken of between us. With that bright confidence which you shall never find misplaced, you have yielded your heart and your happiness to one of whose rank and station, fortune and family, you know nothing."

"I know himself," replied Alice, gazing up in her lover's face, "and I know that he is everything that is noble and good."

"May I ever justify such feelings, Alice," replied Langford; "but still, my beloved, it is necessary that you should know something of me, especially as I may have to draw still more deeply upon your confidence, to call for trust and reliance such as is seldom justified. During the last three or four days, Alice, my mind has been in a state of hesitation and doubt as to what course I should pursue. I felt that, under some points of view, I ought, in propriety, to communicate my feelings to your father in the very first place; and yet, Alice, as I was sure that you knew that I loved you; as I had determined to bind you by no promise till your father's full consent was obtained; and as I had to confide in you, to consult with you, to ask your advice even upon a matter that must affect the whole course of my life, my fortune, my station, and everything—a matter which for many reasons I do not wish to communicate to your father at present, I have judged it best and determined to open my whole heart to you at once."

Alice listened with a slight look of anxiety, for she had entertained some hopes that Langford had communicated his purpose to her father before he came to seek her; but still her apprehensions of opposition from one who loved her so much and esteemed him so highly were not great, and she only replied, "But, of

course, you do not wish our engagements to be concealed from my father."

"Not *our* engagements, sweet Alice," replied Langford; "for, while I hold myself bound for ever to you, I ask you to make no engagement, I suffer you to make none, till you have your father's full consent; and my love for you shall be told to him immediately. But let me first inform you how I am situated. The property which I actually possess is but small; sufficient, indeed, to maintain me in comfort and independence as a gentleman, but no more. My name and reputation with my companions in the field and with those under whom I have served is, I have every cause to believe, fair—may I say it without vanity!—high. This small fortune and this good reputation are all that I absolutely have to offer; but, at the same time, I tell you that a much larger fortune, one that would at once place me on a level in those respects with yourself, is withheld from me unjustly, and cannot, I fear, be recovered by law."

"What matters it," demanded Alice. "What matters it, Langford? My father's consent once given, will not his house, his fortune be our own? What need of more?"

"To you, perhaps not, Alice," replied her lover. "But to me it would be painful; it would be the only painful part of my fate to know that a great disparity existed between your fortune and mine; to have any one insinuate that my Alice had married a mere adventurer. In regard, too, to your father's fortune, Alice, I have much hereafter to say to you; I have something even to say to him. But of that we will not speak now. Suffice it that I could bear no great disparity. But, besides," he added, seeing her about to speak, "I have made a solemn promise, Alice, to pursue the recovery of this property which I mention without pause or hesitation."

"But you said," exclaimed Alice, "that it could not be recovered by law."

"It cannot," replied Langford, "for the papers by which it could be recovered are withheld from me by one powerful and daring, and I cannot obtain them by any act which the law would justify."

"Then give it up altogether," exclaimed Alice. "Do not, do not, Langford, attempt anything that is not justified by law."

"But sometimes," replied her lover, "the law is in

itself unjust; or else, as in the present instance, is impotent to work redress, and would justify the act if it proved successful. The papers are withheld from me by one, as I have said, powerful and daring. What mandate of the law can make him give them up? while I, by force, if I chose to exert it, might take them for myself; and the possession of them would at once justify the deed by which they were acquired."

"Oh, no, no! do not attempt it, Langford," cried Alice. "Suppose you were to fail in obtaining them, what terrible consequences might ensue! He might resist force by force, blood might be spilled, and the man I love become a murderer."

Langford paused for a moment upon the words "The man I love," and casting his eyes towards the ground, he fell into a sweet but short reverie. A moment after, however, he returned to the subject, saying, "But my promise, Alice, my promise to the dead?"

"Langford," said Alice, gravely, and somewhat sadly, laying her right hand at the same time upon his, in which he had continued to hold her left, and gazing up in his face with a look of tenderness and regard; "Langford, I am no great casuist in such matters; but I have always heard that no promise to do what is unlawful can be binding upon any man. God forbid that I should hold that it is right to do any evil, even to the breaking of the slightest promise; but here, Langford, you are between two evils: the breaking of a promise, and the committing of an unlawful act. The breaking of that promise can do wrong to no one; the keeping it may bring misery on yourself, on me, on all who know you; may be followed by bloodshed; ay! and the loss of your good name."

"You are eloquent, my Alice," replied Langford, "and I believe you are right; but still the temptation is so strong, the matter involved is so great and so important, the means of obtaining those papers without force so very doubtful—"

"Oh, if there be means," exclaimed Alice, "if there be *any* means, employ them. Speak with my father upon it; take counsel with him."

"Alice," replied her lover, "it is impossible. I must not speak with him, I ought not to speak with him upon this subject. For his sake, Alice, for yours, I ought not. Alice, forgive me if I am obliged to use some mystery

for the present. That mystery shall soon pass away, and you shall know all."

"I seek not to know it, Langford!" she replied, gazing up in his face; "I am quite satisfied, I am quite sure! Now and for ever my trust is entirely in you. Tell me what you like, conceal from me what you like. I know that I shall never hear of your doing what is wrong, and as for all the rest, I care not."

Langford could not resist such words. He threw his arms round her and pressed her to his heart. His lips met hers in the first kiss of love, and he set her heart at ease by promising to use none but lawful means to obtain even his right. He still held her gently, with one arm thrown lightly round her, and her left hand locked in his, when the sound of a footstep met his ear, and he looked up. Alice's eyes were raised too, and her cheek turned very red and then very pale; for at the aperture at the other end of the bowling-green appeared no other than Lord Harold advancing rapidly towards them.

The reader may have remarked, that whenever we are interrupted in those seasons when the shy heart comes forth from the depths in which it lies concealed, and suns itself for a moment in the open daylight, the person who breaks in upon us is sure to be the one of all the world before whom we should least like to display the inmost feelings of our bosom. Had it been her father who now approached, Alice would have run up to him, placed her hand in his, hid her face upon his bosom, and told him all at once. But, both on her own account and on his, Alice would rather have beheld any other person on the earth than Lord Harold at that moment. He could not but have seen the half embrace in which Langford had held her; he could not but know and divine the whole; and Alice felt grieved that such knowledge must come upon him in so painful a manner; while, though not ashamed, she felt abashed and confused that any one should have been a witness to the first endearment of acknowledged love. Langford's proud nostril expanded, and his head rose high; and, drawing the arm of Alice through his own, he advanced with her direct towards Lord Harold, as if about to return to the house. The young nobleman's countenance was deadly pale, and he was evidently much moved, but he behaved well and calmly.

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"Your father wishes to speak to you, Alice," he said; "I left him but now, just awake."

Langford saw that Alice could not reply, and he answered, "We are even now about to seek Sir Walter, my lord."

"I rather imagine that he has business which may require Mistress Alice's private attention," replied Lord Harold, in the same cold tone which both had used; "I have also to request a few moments' conversation with Captain Langford. I will not detain him long."

Alice suddenly raised her eyes, and looked from one to the other. "Langford," she said, aloud, "before I leave you, I have one word more to say."

"I will rejoin you here in a moment, my lord," said Langford, calmly. Lord Harold bowed; and Langford, with Alice's arm still resting in his, walked on towards the house. Alice spoke to him, as they went, eagerly, and in a low voice. His reply, as he left her at the door of the manor, was, "On my honour! Be quite at ease! Nothing shall induce me."

As soon as he had left her he returned at once to Lord Harold, whom he found standing, with his arms crossed upon his breast, in an attitude of deep thought.

"Your commands, sir," said Langford, as soon as they met.

"By your leave, Captain Langford," replied Lord Harold, "we will walk a little farther, where we are not likely to be interrupted."

Langford signified his assent, and they proceeded in silence for some way till they reached a small glade in the park, where Langford paused, saying, "This is surely far enough, Lord Harold, to prevent our being interrupted in anything you can have to say to me or I to you."

"Perhaps it may be," replied Lord Harold. "I have a question to ask you which may perhaps lead to other questions; and I beg you to give me a sincere and open answer, as it may prevent unpleasant consequences to us both."

"If I think fit to give you any answer at all, Lord Harold," replied Langford, "I will give you a sincere one; but I must know what your question is before I even consider whether I shall answer it or not."

"The question is simply this," rejoined Lord Harold, in a somewhat bitter tone: "Who and what the gen-

leman is who visits this part of the country, introduces himself into our families, and calls himself Captain Langford?"

Langford smiled: "Had I, my lord," he said, "either visited your property, even as a sportsman, in answer to your lordship's own invitation, or had I introduced myself into your family, I might have thought myself bound to give some answer to your question; but, as I have done neither the one nor the other, I will beg you to excuse me from replying to it; and I will pardon you for putting it."

"This is all very good, sir," said Lord Harold, "all very good indeed; but you do not escape me by an affectation of dignity. In the first place, sir, you cannot suppose that I shall conceal from Sir Walter Herbert what I remarked to-day between yourself and his daughter."

Langford turned very red, but he still replied calmly: "In regard to that, my lord, you may do as you please. To be a spy upon other people's actions, or a talebearer in regard to a matter accidentally discovered, and not intended for his eye, is certainly a pleasant employment for a gentleman. But all these things depend upon taste; and if Lord Harold's taste lead him in such a way, Heaven forbid that I should stop him!"

Lord Harold bit his lip: "I shall not be put out of temper, sir," he replied, "by your sarcasm; and were Captain Langford known to me as a gentleman of honour and character, I should—whatever might be my own personal feelings in this matter—I should be far from betraying a secret which came accidentally to my knowledge; but when Captain Langford is totally unknown in this part of the country; when I have reason to believe that he is not always called by the same name or seen in the same character; when, in short, Captain Langford is a very doubtful personage, and I find him introducing himself into the house of my oldest and best friend, and, apparently unknown to that friend, engaging the affections of his daughter, I feel myself bound in honour to be no party to such a transaction, but to bring the whole matter to light as soon as possible."

Langford had remained standing, while the other spoke, in an attitude of attention and with his eyes bent down upon the ground. The moment that Lord Harold had done he raised them, and, with a degree of tranquil-

lity which the young nobleman did not expect, replied, "Perhaps, my lord, you are in the right. I rather believe, in your situation, I should act in the same manner."

Lord Harold looked both surprised and confused. "This is very extraordinary," he said, "and I cannot but believe that there is some design under it. I must insist, sir, upon having an explanation on the spot as to who and what you are; as to what is your title in the society in which I find you, and what your claims to the hand of one of the first heiresses in this country."

"Your pardon, my lord," replied Langford; "you are now going too far. I shall give every explanation that I think fitting to the father of the young lady in question; to you I shall give none till you show me some right which you may have to interfere in the affairs of Mistress Alice Herbert; which, I rather suspect, you cannot do."

Lord Harold again bit his lip; but he replied almost immediately, "The right I have, sir, is twofold: that of one of her oldest friends, and that of an applicant for her hand."

For a moment Langford was about to demand, in reply, whether Lord Harold meant an accepted or a rejected suiter; but he was generous, and refrained. "In neither quality," he said, "can I recognise in you any right to interfere; and you will pardon me if I say that I will not only give you no explanation whatever on the subject, but will not condescend to hear you speak any further on a matter with which you have no title to meddle."

"Then, sir," replied Lord Harold, sharply, "nothing remains but to bid you draw your sword. I do you honour in taking it for granted that you are worthy of mine;" and, as he spoke, he drew his weapon from the sheath, and, with the point dropped, stood as if in expectation that Langford would follow his example.

Langford remained, however, with his arms crossed upon his chest, and a somewhat melancholy smile upon his countenance. "Once more," he said, "you must pardon me, Lord Harold: neither in this matter can I gratify you; not alone because it is a stupid and contemptible habit, only worthy of cowards or of boys who have no other way of showing their courage, but—"

"Well said, Master Harry," cried a voice close behind them: "well said, well said! I think, my little lord—

ling, you had better put up your cold iron, and go your way home to your father. To think of a man wishing to bore a hole in his neighbour, like Smith, the house-carpenter, with his long gimlet! Let us look at your skewer in a handle, my lord;" and, as he spoke, Silly John, the half-witted man of the village, whom we have before described, advanced, extending his hand to take hold of the blade of Lord Harold's sword.

The young nobleman pushed him sharply aside, however, bidding him begone with an angry frown.

"Well, I'll be gone," replied the half-witted man, "but I'll be back again in a minute, with more hands to help me;" and away he ran in the direction of the stream and the village.

"Now, sir! quick!" exclaimed Lord Harold. "If you would not have me suppose you both a coward and an impostor, draw your sword, and give me satisfaction at once."

"Your lordship may suppose anything that you please," replied Langford; "having done nothing that can reasonably dissatisfy you, I shall certainly do nothing to give you any other sort of satisfaction."

"Then, sir, I shall treat you as you deserve," replied Lord Harold, "and chastise you as a cowardly knave;" and, putting up his sword, he advanced to strike his opponent.

But Langford caught his hand in his own powerful grasp, and stopped him, saying, "Hold, Lord Harold, hold! I *will* give you one word of explanation! If, after having heard that, you choose to draw your sword and seek my life, you shall do so; but remember, as you are a man of honour, to none, no, not to the nearest and dearest, must you reveal the import of these words;" and, drawing him closer to him, he whispered what seemed to be a single word in the young nobleman's ear. Langford then let go his hold; and, pale as ashes, with a quivering lip and a straining eye, Lord Harold staggered back. His companion turned upon his heel and walked away, either not hearing or not choosing to attend to the young nobleman's entreaty to speak with him one word more.

Langford took his way direct to the Manor House; but, upon entering the door which stood open to the park, he perceived a good deal of bustle and confusion among the servants; and on asking if Sir Herbert were

in the library, the reply was, "Yes;" but it was added, that he and Mistress Alite were both busy with a gentleman on matters of deep importance. While he was speaking with the servant, Langford, through a door which stood open at the end of a long passage, and afforded a view into the court, perceived Lord Harold come in with a quick step and a somewhat disordered air; and mounting his horse, which was held by one of Sir Walter's grooms, ride slowly away, without even attempting to enter the house.

"I am about to walk to the village," continued Langford, speaking to the servant. "Will you tell Sir Walter so when he is visible; for I expect a messenger from London, and may not be back to supper if I find letters which require an answer!"

He then proceeded through the house, gained the road which led over the bridge, and was proceeding towards the village in the twilight which was now beginning to fall, when he thought he recognised a form that was advancing towards him, though still at some distance. It proved to be that of the same fair-haired boy, named Jocelyn, whom we have more than once had occasion to mention. He spoke not a word when he came near, but placed a letter in Langford's hands, which the other tore open and read, though with some difficulty, from the obscurity of the hour.

"There is scarcely time," he said, after he had made out the contents of the epistle, which was very short. "There is scarcely time. Nevertheless, tell him I will be there; but say also, good Jocelyn, that my resolution is the same as when we last met. I will not try it!"

"I will tell him," was the boy's only reply; and, leaving Langford, he ran down the road by the stream with a rapid pace.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

THE moon had not risen; the sun had gone down; the sky, which for near a month had been as calm and serene as a good mind, was covered over with long lines of dark gray cloud, heavy, and near the earth;

when a solitary horseman took his station under a broad old tree upon the wide waste called Uppington Moor, and gazed forth as well as the growing darkness would let him. It was a dim and sombre scene, unsatisfactory to the eye, but exciting to the imagination. Everything was vague and undefined in the shadows of that hour, and the long streaks of deeper and fainter brown which varied the surface of the moor spoke merely of undulations in the ground, marking the great extent of the plain towards the horizon. A tall, solitary, mournful tree might be seen here and there, adding to the feeling of vastness and solitude; and about the middle of the moor, as one looked towards the west, was a small detached grove, or, rather, clump of large beeches, presenting a black irregular mass, at the side of which the lingering gleam of the northwestern sky was reflected in some silvery lines upon what seemed a considerable piece of water. That was the only light which the landscape contained, and it would have cut harsh with the gloomy and ominous view around, had not a thin mist, rising over the whole, softened the features of the scene, and left them still more indistinct and melancholy.

It was an hour and a place fit for sad thoughts and dark forebodings; and the horseman sat upon his tall powerful gelding in the attitude of one full of meditation. He had suffered the bridle to drop, his head was slightly bent forward, and his eye strained upon the scene before him; while his mind seemed to drink in, from its solemn and cheerless aspect, feelings as dark and dismal as itself. He sat there about a quarter of an hour, and not a sound had been heard upon the moor but the deep sort of sobbing creaking of a neighbouring marsh, or the shrill cry of some bird of night as it skimmed by with downy and noiseless wings. There was not a breath of air stirring; there was no change took place in the aspect of the sky or the earth; it was as if nature were dead, and the feeling seemed to become oppressive, for the horseman at length gently touched his beast with his heel, and made him move slowly out from under the branches of the tree.

Scarcely had he done so, however, when the distant sound of a horse's feet was heard, as if coming at a very tardy and heavy pace from the west. The sound, indeed, would not have been perceptible at that dis-

tance but for the excessive stillness of all around, and the eagerness with which the traveller listened. His eye was now bent anxiously, too, upon the western gleam in the water, and in a few minutes the dark figure of another man on horseback was seen against the brighter background thus afforded, riding slowly on, as the road he followed wound round the mere.

It was like a scene in a phantasmagoria, and in a moment after two more figures were added, and all three suddenly stopped. None of the minute parts of their proceedings were visible, and it was impossible, at that distance, to discern how they were occupied; but a moment after there seemed a sudden degree of agitation in the group; then came a bright flash, followed at a considerable interval by the report of a pistol, and immediately after all three horsemen disappeared.

"What may this mean?" said the stranger, aloud. "I fear there is mischief." The sound of his voice seemed strange in the midst of this solitude; but he had scarcely spoken when the stillness was again broken by the noise of a horse's feet; but this time it came from another direction, not exactly opposite, but much to the right hand of the spot whence the former sounds had proceeded, and the beast was evidently galloping as fast as he could over turf. It came nearer and nearer, and the watcher went back under the tree.

At length another powerful cavalier became visible, approaching at full speed; and, as he drew nigh, he looked round more than once, and pulled up his horse suddenly by the tree. "Are you there?" he said, in a low voice; and the next moment the other came forth and joined him.

"Quick! quick! Master Harry," continued the one who had joined him; "put your horse into a gallop, and come on with all speed."

"But I told you, Franklin," replied the other, holding back, "I told you that I would have nothing to do with it! What I saw a month ago under the park wall was quite sufficient; and I would have no hand in such a business were it to put a crown upon my head."

"Foolish boy! the business is done without you to a certain point," replied his companion. "I have served you whether you would or not; and I suppose, of course, you will be ungrateful. Come on with me, and you shall have the key of the chest, which I have ven-

tured my neck to get for you. You have nothing to do but to walk in and take what is your own. But come on! come on quick! You would not have me taken, I suppose; and I have reason to think I am followed."

Thus saying, he put his horse again into a gallop, and Langford followed at the same pace. Two or three times, as they rode on, Franklin Gray looked back over the moor; but no moving object of any kind was to be seen, except one of those creeping phosphoric lights which linger on the edges of an old marsh; no sound of any kind was to be heard but the measured beating of their horses' feet upon the hollow-sounding turf.

At length, when they had gone about two miles farther, Franklin Gray checked his horse's speed, saying, "There is no one following now, yet they made the signal from the hill! Did you not hear a pistol shot just before I came up?"

"Yes," replied Langford; "I heard it distinctly, and saw the flash. Was that as a signal that some one was following you?"

"It was," answered Gray. "But how you could see the flash I don't understand, for they were down below the brow of the hill, where one can see both roads to the castle."

"Oh no!" said Langford. "The men who fired that shot were upon the moor close by Upwater Mere, and I very much fear, Gray, that some of these accursed evil companions of yours have been again committing an act that you neither knew of nor desired."

"If they have," exclaimed Gray, with a horrid imprecation, "I will shoot the first of them, were he my own brother."

"How many were there of them on the watch?" demanded Langford.

"Two," replied his companion.

"Then I will tell you what I saw," answered Langford. "As I sat on my horse and looked out over the mere which just caught a gleam from the sky, the figure of a horseman crossed the light as if he were going to the castle. Just at that minute two more came out upon him from among the beeches, it seemed to me; then came the pistol shot; and a minute after they all disappeared."

Gray gave utterance to another terrible oath; and then, after thinking a few minutes, he added, "But it



can't be any of my people ! They dared not, after the warning I gave them about that bad business under the park fence."

"At all events," cried Langford, reining up his horse entirely, "had we not better go back and see ! I fear very much, Franklin, that they have shot the man, whoever he is."

"No, no," replied Franklin ; "if they have shot him, he is shot, and there is no need of our meddling with the matter."

"But he may be merely wounded," replied Langford ; "we had better go back."

"No !" thundered Franklin Gray ; "I tell you no ! It is mere madness ! We are but half a mile from the house : when I have got there we shall learn who has done this, and I will send out and see if there is any one hurt. Come on, come on !"

Langford followed his bidding, and, renewing their quick pace, they rode on for about half a mile farther, till, amid a clump of tall trees at the very edge of the moor, where some poor, thin, unproductive fields connected it with the cultivated country, they perceived a light shining from a small window in a tall building before them.

At that period there still remained scattered over the face of England a number of those edifices which, fortified to a certain degree, combined the modern house with the ancient feudal hold, and had been rendered very serviceable to both parties in the progress of the great rebellion. These fortified houses were of every size, from that which really well merited the name of castle, to that which was no more than a mere tower ; and many of them, either from being injured by the chances of war, or from having lost a great part of their utility when the scourge of civil contention was removed from the country, had gone completely to decay, or had been applied to the calmer and more homely-uses of the barn, the grange, or the farmhouse.

Such was the house which Langford and his companion now approached ; and, as far as the darkness of the hour suffered its outline to appear, it seemed to the former to be a tall heavy tower of stonework, with four small windows on the side next to them. Beneath its protection, and attached to it on one side, with the gable end turned towards the road, was a lower building,

with a high peaked roof of slates; and close by, another mass of masonry, apparently the ruins of a church or chapel. The light that the horseman had seen came from one of the upper windows of the tower; but there were lights, also, in the less elevated building by its side. A low wall stood before the whole, enclosing a little neglected garden; and through a gate which stood open in this wall Franklin Gray led his companion in, and up to the door of the tower. There, beside the door, stood the ancient steps, which many a burly cavalier in the Hudibrastic days, and in days long before that, had employed to mount his horse's back; and there, too, on either side of the entrance, was many a ring, staple, and hook, for the purpose of fastening up the troopers' horses, while their masters rested or caroused in the hall hard by.

Having attached their bridles to two of these hooks, Franklin Gray and his companion proceeded to seek admission into the tower. To gain this, Gray first struck the door three or four times distinctly with his heavy hand. The moment he had done so, a light step was heard running along within; and after manifold bolts and bars had been withdrawn, the boy Jocelyn threw open the door, and Langford followed his companion into a low, narrow entrance hall, on the right of which was another door, and at the end a dim flight of stone steps leading apparently to the upper apartments.

Scarcely, however, had the foot of Franklin Gray fallen three times on that stone passage, when a light came gleaming down the stairs; and the next instant the flutter of a woman's garments was seen, as she descended with a step of joy. She was as lovely a creature as the eye of man ever rested upon, though the first years of youthful grace were passed, and though the sun of a warmer land than this had died her skin with a rich brown. Her eyes—her large, full, liquid eyes—were as black as jet, and the long dark fringe that edged both the upper and the under lid left but little of the white visible. The glossy black hair, divided on the forehead, was tied in a large massy knot behind, without any ornament whatsoever; but along the whole line might be traced a strong undulation, which told that, if free, it would have fallen in ringlets round her face; and, even as it was, two or three thick curls escaped from the knot behind, and hung in glossy masses on her neck. Her

age might be three or four-and-twenty, and her form had the fulness of that age, but without having lost any of the symmetry of youth.

She carried a lamp in her hand, and the light of it showed her dark eyes sparkling with joy as they rested upon Franklin Gray. Setting down the light upon the stairs, she darted forward at once, and cast herself upon his bosom, exclaiming, with a strong foreign accent, "You have come back! you have come back! Oh, I have been so uneasy about you!"

"But why, my Mona?" demanded Franklin Gray, with his whole tone and manner changed to one of the utmost gentleness as soon as he addressed her. "Why more to-night than at other times when I am obliged to leave you?"

"Oh, I do not well know," she replied; "but you kissed me twice before you went; and then you came back to kiss me once more, and bid me remember you; and I felt sure you were going on some dangerous expedition; I felt sad at heart myself, too, as if some evil would come of this night."

"Evil has come of it, I fear," replied Franklin Gray; but he then added quickly, seeing her turn pale at his words, "Evil not upon me or of my doing, Mona. But go up again, beloved! go up again! and I will come to you directly. You see I have some one with me."

She turned her eyes upon Langford, whom she had not seemed to notice before; and then, bowing her head gracefully and slowly, she raised the lamp again and disappeared up the steps.

When she was gone Franklin Gray turned round and gazed upon Langford for a moment with a proud yet melancholy smile. There was a world of meaning in his look, and Langford could only reply to it by exclaiming, with a glance still more sorrowful, "Oh, Gray, this is very sad!"

"Come, come," cried his companion, "it shall be amended some day, Harry. Come, Jocelyn," he continued, turning to the boy, "tell me, Master Page, who are in the hall, and how many?"

The boy's brow became grave at the question. "There are but three, sir," he replied; "there is James of Coventry, and there is Doveton and Little Harvey."

"Indeed," said Gray, shutting his teeth close, as if to keep down angry feelings that were rising fast; "in-

deed;" and he threw open the door with his right hand which led into a small dark room. That again he strode across, giving Langford a sign to follow, and then opened another door, which admitted them into a much larger chamber, well lighted, in the midst of which was a large table furnished with a flagon and some drinking-cups. At the farther end sat two men playing with dice, while a third, a short, smart-looking personage, was standing behind observing their game. They ceased when Franklin Gray and his companion appeared; and the merriment which they evidently had been enjoying was over in a moment.

"But you three left!" said Gray, as he entered; "but you three left! Where are Hardcastle and Wiley?"

"They went out shortly after you, Captain Gray," replied one of the men who were playing; "I can't tell where they are."

"Doveton," replied Gray, in a calm, grave tone, "you are a gentleman and a soldier; so are you, James; and Master Harvey, too, though he did not serve with us either in Germany or in the New World, has had the honour of serving in Ireland, and is a man of honour. Now I ask you all, straightforwardly, where are these two men gone to? Marcham and Henry of the Hill I took with me; all the others I know about also; but where are Wiley and Hardcastle, and what are they about?"

"Why, really, sir," replied the man called Doveton, "we can only tell by guess; for, since that business down in the green lane, they have kept very much by themselves, and don't seem to deal fairly with us, especially Wiley."

"I'll tell you what, captain," said the man who was standing behind, and whom they called among themselves Little Harvey, "I wish Wiley was out among us; he will get us all into mischief some day. He does not do things in a gentleman-like way. I guess what he is gone after; but he has not succeeded, I see." And, as he spoke, he gave a significant glance towards Langford, as if he were in some degree connected with the matter in question.

"Indeed!" said Gray; "I suspect your meaning, Harvey; but let us hear more plainly what you think. Though I direct and guide, and am always willing to take the greatest dangers on myself, still we are com-

rades, and should treat each other as such. What is it you think, Harvey?"

"I won't say what I think," replied the man, "but I'll say what I saw. When you sent the boy Jocelyn down to the manor, Wiley cross-questioned him both before he went and when he came back; and when he heard him give you a message about a gentleman meeting you on the moor, he whispered a good deal to Hardcastle, who came up and asked me if I would go along with them upon an enterprise which must be quite secret, and which must be done without your knowing it. I refused; and told him I thought that, after the business down in the lane, he had better not let Wiley lead him; but to that he answered that this was a matter which could not fail as the other had done, and that it would be over in five minutes. I said I would not go, however; and they went without me."

"Hark, they are coming!" said Gray, as the sound of horses' feet was heard stopping opposite the house. "Let them in the back way, Jocelyn, and bring in supper. Here! Come with me, Master Harry." And he led the way back into the hall by which they had at first entered, and in which there still remained the lamp that the boy Jocelyn had carried when he gave them admittance. Gray carefully shut the doors behind him; and when he stood alone in the passage with Langford, he unbuttoned his vest, and took from an inner pocket a key of a very peculiar and extraordinary form.

"There is the key, Master Harry," he said, speaking quickly, and with strong passions of some kind evidently struggling in his breast. "Your own fate is now in your own power! Manage it as you will!"

"But tell me how this has been obtained," said Langford.

"I have no time for long stories," replied his companion, sharply. "There it is! that is sufficient. But I will tell you so far, I—I alone—though directed by one who knew the house well, walked through it this night from one end to the other; and within six yards of the old man himself, with nothing but a door between us, took this key from the hiding-place where he thought it so safe, and brought it away undiscovered. Now, Harry, leave me! I am not in a humour to speak much. I have matters before me that may well make me silent. Mount your horse, and be gone with all speed.

Why do you linger? Oh! I will send out ere ten minutes be over; and, if there be a possibility of undoing what has been done amiss, it shall be undone, on my honour. Take the back road," he added, as he opened the door for Langford; "take the back road; and, for worlds, go no more upon the moor to-night! I ask you for my own sake," he added, seeing his companion hesitate; "not for yours, but for mine!"

Langford made no reply, but, mounting his horse, rode away with feelings of a nature the most mingled and the most painful.

Those of the man he left behind were of a different character, but still terrible. With Langford there were feelings which he seldom experienced, doubt and hesitation as to his own course of action, mingling with vague apprehensions of evil, and deep regret to see a man possessed of many noble qualities, who had been his friend, his companion, and even his protector in the early days of youth, now plunged into a current terrible in itself and terrible in its consequences; following a course which he had long suspected that Gray did really follow, but without having conviction forced upon him till that night.

With Franklin Gray it was very different; his whole feelings, for the time, were swallowed up in one stern and gloomy resolution.

There was anger, indeed, at the bottom of that resolution; wrath of the most bitter and deadly kind; but even that was almost lost in the effort to exclude from his thoughts everything that might shake, even in the least degree, the dark and terrible determination he had formed.

As soon as Langford had gone he returned to the hall in which he had left his comrades; and there, as he expected, he found the party increased by the presence of the two men, Wiley and Hardcastle, whose names we have mentioned more than once, and whom we have seen busy in the attack upon Alice Herbert.

It was evident that some conversation had passed between them and the others regarding the indignation which they had excited in their leader; and while, in the rough countenance of Hardcastle, might be traced a great deal of shame and apprehension, in the more cunning face of Wiley appeared a degree of hesitating uncertainty, mingling strangely with dogged defiance, and

making him look like an ill-tempered hound about to receive the lash, but not very sure whether to lie down and howl, or fly at the throat of the huntsman. The boy Jocelyn was busily bringing in some dishes and setting them on the table; but he glanced at Franklin Gray from time to time, seeming to know better than any one present the character of the man with whom they had to deal, and to divine what was likely to be the issue.

Franklin Gray said not a word in regard to the matter which was in all their thoughts; but, sitting down at the head of the table, he made some observations upon the bread, which was not good; and then added, speaking to the others, "Begin, begin! Marcham and Henry of the Hill won't be long."

"I heard them coming over the hill but now," said the boy Jocelyn.

Gray made no reply, and the rest began their meal in silence; but he ate nothing, looking curiously at the knife in his hand as if there was something very interesting in the blade. He made the boy give him a silver cup, indeed, full of wine from the tankard; and, as he was drinking it, the two others whom he had mentioned came in laughing, and seemed surprised to see the grave and stern manner in which the supper was passing.

The matter was soon explained, however; for, no sooner had they sat down in the places left for them, than Franklin Gray fixed his eyes upon Wiley, and said, "Now, my Masters Wiley and Hardcastle, we are all present but two: be so good as to tell me where you have been to-night?"

The time which had elapsed; the indifference, and even carelessness which had hitherto appeared in Gray's manner; and a cup or two of wine which he himself had drunk, had removed the degree of apprehension which at first mingled with the sullen determination of Wiley; and he replied at once, with a look of effrontery, "I don't think that at all necessary, captain! I rather believe that I have as much right to ride my horse over any common in the kingdom as you have, without giving you any account of it either."

"You hear," said Franklin Gray, looking round calmly to the rest, "you hear!"

"Come, come, Master Wiley," cried the man called Doveton, "that won't do after what we all swore when

we came down here. Come, Hardcastle, you are the best of the two; come, you tell Captain Gray at once what you have been about. We must know, if it be but for our own safety."

"Oh! I'll tell at once," said Hardcastle. "Devilish sorry am I that I ever went; and I certainly would not have gone had I known how it would turn out. I'll never go again with Wiley as long as I live: I told him so as we came over the common."

Wiley muttered something not very laudatory of his companion; but it was drowned in the stern voice of Franklin Gray, who exclaimed, "Go on, Hardcastle!"

"Why, we went out to the beeches by Upwater Mere," replied Hardcastle; "and we had not been there long when up came some one on horseback, going along slowly towards the castle. It was not the person we were looking for, however—"

"Pray, who were you looking for?" interrupted Franklin Gray.

"Why, I think that is scarcely fair, captain," said Hardcastle.

"It matters not," replied Gray; "I know without your telling me. Go on!"

"Well, as the young man came up," continued the other, "Wiley said we might as well have what he had upon him. So we rode up, and asked him to stop quite civilly; but, instead of doing so, he drew his sword, and spurred on his horse upon Wiley, and—"

"Well," exclaimed Gray, impatiently, "what then? I heard the pistol fired," he said, seeing the man hesitate, "so tell the truth."

"Well," said Hardcastle, "well;" and, as he spoke, he turned somewhat pale: "well, then Wiley fired, you know, and brought him down; and we pulled him under the beeches, and took what we could get. We have not divided it yet, but it seems a good sum."

As his companion had been detailing the particulars of their crime, the changes which had come over Wiley's countenance were strange and fearful. He had watched with eager anxiety the countenance of Franklin Gray, who sat nearly opposite to him at the other end of the table; but, being able to gather nothing from those stern dark features, he ran his eye rapidly round the faces of the rest; and, after several changes of expression, resumed, as well as he could, the look of cunning and



daring impudence which he had at first put on. The entrance of the boy Jocelyn with some plates, just behind him, however, made him give a sharp start and look round. Franklin Gray fixed his eyes upon the boy and waved his hand; and Jocelyn immediately went round to the other side of the table.

"Hardcastle," said their leader, "I shall find some means of punishing you. As for you, Wiley—"

"You shall not punish me, Captain Gray!" interrupted Wiley, knitting his brows and speaking through his teeth; "you shall not punish me! for, by —, if you don't mind what you are about, I'll hang you all."

Franklin Gray sat and heard him calmly, keeping his eyes fixed upon him with stern unchanging gaze till he had done speaking. He then looked round once more, saying, "You hear!" and, at the same moment, he at once drew a pistol from under his coat. Every face around turned pale but his own, and Wiley started up from the table. But, before he could take a single step, and while yet, with agony of approaching fate upon him, he gazed irresolute in the face of his leader, the unerring hand of Franklin Gray had levelled the pistol and fired.

The ball went right through his head; the unhappy man bounded up two or three feet from the ground, and then fell dead at the end of the table. Franklin Gray sat perfectly still, gazing through the smoke for about a minute, and through the whole hall reigned an awful silence. He then laid the pistol calmly down on the table before him, and drew forth a second.

Hardcastle crossed his arms upon his breast, and looked him full in the face, saying, "Well, captain, I am ready."

"You mistake me," said Gray, laying down the pistol on the table with the muzzle turned towards himself. "My friends, if I have done wrong by the shot I have fired, any of you that so pleases has but to take up that pistol and use it as boldly as I have done its fellow. What say you, am I right or wrong?"

"Right, right!" replied every voice.

"Well, then," said Gray, putting up the weapons again, "some of you take him down; and you, Deveton and Marcham, hark ye;" and he spoke a few words to them apart. "Take Hardcastle with you," he added; "that shall be his punishment!" So saying, he turned, took up a lamp that stood near, and left the hall.

Franklin Gray mounted the steps in the tower that we have mentioned slowly and sadly, paused half way up, and fell into deep thought. His reverie lasted but a minute; he then proceeded, and reached the room where the fair being whom he called Mona was watching anxiously for his coming. Her eyes questioned him, but he made no reply in words. He threw his right arm round her, however, and rested his face upon her bosom for several minutes with his eyes shut; then pressed her to his heart, kissed her cheek, and said, "Come, my Mona! come and see our babe sleeping."

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## CHAPTER IX.

For nearly three miles Langford rode rapidly on. His mind was in that state of confusion and uncertainty which admitted not of any slow movement of the body; but as he thought again and again of all that had occurred, he the more deeply regretted that he had ever gone to the rendezvous with Franklin Gray, although his purpose in there going was to separate his own proceedings for ever from those of one whose present pursuits could be no longer doubtful. When Langford had known him in former years, he was a wild and reckless soldier of fortune, whose bold, rash spirit had prevented rather than aided him in rising to those high grades in the service which his talents might otherwise have obtained. His heart had ever, as far as Langford had seen it, been kind, noble, and generous; there were many circumstances which had connected them closely in our hero's early life: and in himself and his fate Franklin Gray had ever taken a deep and affectionate interest.

His hatred of inactivity, his love of enterprise, his daring courage, his strong and determined resolution, his rapid powers of combination, and that peculiar talent for command which is a gift rather than an acquirement, had made him loved and admired by the soldiery under him, and might have gone far to constitute one of the greatest generals of the age. But by his fellow-officers he had never been loved, and by those above him he had constantly been used, but had never been

trusted or liked. In truth, there was a fierce and overbearing spirit in his bosom, a contempt for other men's opinions, and an abhorrence of the ordinary littleness of human nature, which prevented him from seeking or winning the regard of any one towards whom some peculiar circumstance or some extraordinary powers had not excited in his bosom feelings either of tenderness or of respect; and for this reason he had never been loved. Why he had never been trusted was another matter. He had set out in life depending more upon feeling than upon principle as his guide; and though, as he went on, he had framed for his own bosom a sort of code of laws by which he was strictly bound, those laws did not always very well accord with the ordinary code of mankind; and, if generally acted upon, must have been disastrous to society. Those who disliked him—very often for his superiority to themselves—were glad to find in his failings a specious excuse for undervaluing his better qualities, and thus he had been always thwarted and bitterly disappointed in his progress in life.

Brought up as a soldier from his earliest years, he had ever looked upon strife as his profession, life as one great campaign, the world as a battle-field, mankind either enemies or fellow-soldiers. The great law that he had laid down for himself was, never to measure himself against any but those who were equal to the strife; and he would just as soon have thought of injuring the weak, the innocent, or the defenceless, as he would of murdering the wounded in an hospital. The proud, the haughty, and the strong he took a pleasure in humbling or overthrowing, even when bound to the same cause with himself; and the constant single combats in which he was engaged had raised him up a bad name in the service.

In other respects, though no one could ever accuse Gray of injuring the peasant or taking away a part of the honest earnings of the farmer, though, even under the orders of his general, he would take no part in raising contributions from the hardworking and industrious, and it was in vain to send him upon such expeditions, yet there had been many a tale current in the camp of Gray and his troopers sacking and burning the castles in the Palatinate, driving the cattle from under the very guns of the enemy's fortresses, and sweeping the wealth

from the palace of the prince or the bishop. Thus he had established in some degree the character of a daring, but somewhat marauding officer; and any soldier of more than ordinary enterprise and rashness ever sought to be enrolled in his troop. He had left the service of France in disgust some time before Langford, and they had not met again till Langford, called suddenly to the deathbed of a parent, found Gray, who had known her and hers in happier days, tending her with the care and kindness of a son.

Of what had taken place in the interim Langford was ignorant. From time to time, Gray talked of other lands which he had visited, and more burning climates which he had known; but he did so in a vague and obscure manner, which excited curiosity without inviting inquiry. Langford had made none; and, though they had met frequently since, and dark suspicions and apprehensions—springing from a comparison of Gray's former poverty and his known prodigality with the wealth he seemed now to have at command—had from time to time crossed his friend's mind in regard to the pursuits to which he had dedicated himself, it was only on the occasion of the present visit to Moorhurst that Langford had obtained a positive certainty of the painful truth. As soon as he had obtained that certainty, he determined to warn, to exhort, to beseech his former friend to leave the dangerous pursuits in which he was engaged, to offer once more to share with him all his little wealth, in gratitude for many an act of kindness gone before, and for a service that Gray was even then anxious to do him, at the risk of life itself; but on no account whatsoever to participate in any scheme conducted by the other, however great and important the object to be gained for himself.

His own wound, and the temporary disappearance of Gray and his companions from that part of the country, had prevented Langford from notifying to him this intention fully after the night of the attack upon Alice Herbert, though he had done so in general terms twice before; and he had gone to the rendezvous appointed by Gray, on the night of which we have just been speaking, supposing that it was to have preceded, not to have followed, the enterprise proposed. All that he had seen had been terribly painful to him; and, in what had occurred upon the moor, he had too good reason to be-

lieve that an act had been committed which he should not be justified in concealing. Yet how was he to reveal it without the basest breach of confidence and the grossest ingratitude towards a man who had been risking all to serve him! How was he to denounce the crime that had been committed, and bring to justice the perpetrators thereof, without involving Gray in the same destruction?

Such were the matters in his thoughts as he rode rapidly on towards the Manor House; but, by the time he had gone about three miles, his mind had been naturally led to inquire who was the unfortunate person that had been attacked; and, for the first time, an apprehension crossed his mind that it might be Lord Harold.

"And yet," thought Langford, as he rode along, "he would never go over the moor at that time of night, and alone. He must have been home long before, too: nevertheless, he set out very slowly; and he seemed to turn to the right as if he were going by the moor. He may have loitered by the way, or visited some cottage, or called at some house. Good God! this uncertainty is not to be borne. I must and will go back to the moor."

As he thus thought he turned his horse short round, and galloped back as fast as possible, following the road which led to the piece of water called Upwater Mere. By the time he reached it the moon was just rising, and spreading through the hazy sky, near the horizon, a red and ominous glare. It served to cast some light upon the road, however; and Langford, calculating with the keen accuracy of a soldier, had fixed exactly upon the spot, before he reached it, where he had seen the unfortunate traveller encountered by his two assailants.

When he did reach that spot, the deep gory stains in the sandy road but too plainly showed him he was right; and he traced the course of the murderers along by the thick drops of gore, till the track was lost in the grass beneath the beech trees. The darkness which reigned under their branches rendered all farther search fruitless; and, after having given up nearly half an hour to the painful but unsuccessful task, he once more mounted his horse, and, with feelings of deep gloom and despondency, took his way back towards the Manor House.

It was nearly eleven o'clock at night ere Langford

reached the gates, and the family generally retired to rest before that hour.

Certain doubts and apprehensions, however, in regard to the affairs of Sir Walter Herbert—doubts and apprehensions springing from a thousand minute incidents, which he had noticed while staying as a visiter in the house—had induced him to inquire farther, from sources whence he might derive certain information; and the information he had thus acquired made him now determine to return to the manor that night rather than go to the inn, though the hour was somewhat unseasonable.

He found all the servants up; and there was a look of anxiety and apprehension in the countenances of all, which led him to believe that his fears were not unfounded, and that the business in which Sir Walter had been engaged during the evening was both painful in itself, and such as could no longer be concealed from his household.

In those days, when difficulties and embarrassments overtook a country gentleman, the case was much more painful than it is at present. Habits of luxury and dissipation, ostentatious rivalry with one another, and many of the other vices which, in the present times, have rendered the transfer of property from the old gentry of the land but too common, and burdens upon that which does remain very general, had then scarcely reached the country; and though the dissipated inhabitants of towns, the gay debauched peer, the fopling of the court, and the speculating merchant, might know, from time to time, every reverse of fortune, it seldom occurred in those days that the old proprietor of lands in the country experienced any great and detrimental change, unless tempted to leave the calm enjoyments of rural life for the more dangerous pleasures of the town.

Civil wars, indeed, and political strife had brought about or laid the foundation for the ruin of a great number of the country gentry; and such, in some degree, had been the case with Sir Walter Herbert. His father had served King Charles both with sword and purse, and had never received either payment or recompense. The matter had gone on slowly since, drop by drop, till the cup was nearly full.

Sir Walter had shut his eyes to the fact, and had carefully concealed a situation, the whole extent of which he did not himself know, and which he always hoped

to remedy, from the eyes of those around him. It could not be, however, but that reports of embarrassment should get abroad; and it was well known in the country that, some five or six years before, he had become security to the amount of ten thousand pounds for a neighbouring gentleman, who failed to pay the debt, fled, and left the country. But every one knew, also, that the bond was in the hands of Lord Danemore, Sir Walter's acquaintance and neighbour; and every one, when the subject was mentioned, smiled, and declared that Lord Harold, the son of the peer, and Mistress Alice Herbert, would find means of cancelling the debt.

We have already had occasion to show that such expectations were vain; and the reports of embarrassment which had reached Langford's ears, from sources which he could not doubt, had rendered his suit to Alice Herbert as disinterested as it could be, but had prepared his mind for what he was about to hear.

"I am afraid something is the matter, Halliday," he said, addressing the servant who gave him admittance. "What has happened, do you know?"

"I am afraid something has gone wrong too, captain," replied the servant, with a sorrowful expression of countenance; "but Mistress Alice, I dare say, will tell you all about it. She is sitting up in the library to see you, and begged you would come to her whenever you came in."

Langford waited for no one to usher him to her presence; but, by two or three rapid steps, passed the servant, and opened the library door.

Alice was sitting at a table with a book before her. It were vain to say that she was reading; for though her eyes had more than once fixed upon the pages, and had scanned several sentences so as to make out the words, of the meaning of those words her mind was very little conscious. Her eyes were now tearless, but it was clear to Langford that she had been weeping not long before. The noise of his foot made her instantly rise, and the colour became a good deal deeper in her cheek; betraying a part, but a very small part, of the varied emotions that were going on within.

The heart of her lover was throbbing at that moment with many an anxiety, it is true; but, strange as it may seem, love and noble pride, ay, and even joy, engrossed

by far the greater part. He guessed, no, he divined all that she felt, however; the pain, the care, the apprehensiveness that burdened her breast, as she rose after waiting there alone to receive him in order to tell him the tale of her father's embarrassments; a tale which he well knew she had never herself heard before that night.

Langford would not have paused a moment under such circumstances for worlds; and, with a step as quick as lightning, he was by her side. He took her hand in his. He made her sit down again, and drew a chair near her, gazing upon her with a look so full of tenderness and affection, that—though sweet, most sweet to all her feelings—it made the tears again rise into her eyes. It matters not whether what we drop into a full cup be earth or a jewel; the cup overflows with either. Langford was anxious to speak first himself, and was not sorry that any emotion, not painful in itself, should prevent her from commencing the conversation.

"Alice," he said, "dear Alice, something painful has happened, I know, and I guess the nature of it; but do not let it affect you too deeply. If you did but know how common these events are in the gay world of the metropolis, it would become lighter in your eyes than it is now, breaking upon you suddenly, and ignorant of all such transactions."

"Then you have heard?" said Alice, gazing mournfully in his face.

"No, I have not," replied Langford; "but I have divined what is the matter; I divined long ago."

"Then you were indeed generous," she said, "to wish to link your fate with mine; for it seems to be an evil one."

"Not so, dearest," replied Langford; "not so! I would say, that all I ask is to share it, if I had not the vain hope, my beloved, of doing more, and rendering it a happy one."

"Oh! but, Langford, I fear you do not know all," replied Alice; "and though I waited here on purpose to tell you, I do not know whether I shall be able to do so distinctly; for I am unacquainted with even the terms of these things. But I will tell you what happened when I came home. I found my poor father sitting here in a terrible state of agitation, and Lord Dane-



more's lawyer with him, looking cold and stiff, and taking snuff, and a very different man indeed from what I have seen him in former days, bowing down to the ground, and scarcely venturing to sit down in the same room with my father. He it was that told me, for my father could not, that there was what he called a bond and judgment for ten thousand pounds and interest, which my father owed Lord Danemore; and that my father had offered to give him a mortgage on his estate for it; but that Lord Danemore would not take one, both because he wanted the money, and because he said that the estate was mortgaged already up to its value."

"That must be a mistake, I think," said Langford. "You will forgive me, Alice, for having made some inquiries lately; and will not, I know, attribute my having done so to any motive but the true one. I have, however, made such inquiries; and I feel sure that this lawyer of Lord Danemore's has greatly exaggerated, and has done so for the purpose of embarrassing your father."

"Oh! I cannot think he could be so cruel," exclaimed Alice, "when he saw the dreadful state of agitation in which my father was. However, he made it out, in short, that we had nothing on earth left but the pictures and the plate, and my poor mother's jewels; and he said that all he wanted to know was, first, whether I would be willing to give up the little fortune that was left me by my aunt, to pay one half of the debt; and, next, when my father would pay the remainder. He said, too, he had no objection to give my father a week to do so."

"A week!" exclaimed Langford, "a week! The pitiful scoundrel! Is that the way he treats his master's friend! However, Alice, he shall find himself mistaken! Listen to me, my beloved," and, clasping her hand in his, he glided his other arm round her waist, and gazed fondly and tenderly in her face: "I have some means of knowing, Alice, what is taking place in this neighbourhood, which it is needless to explain; and certain circumstances induced me to believe that this claim would be made by Lord Danemore on your father immediately. Alice," he added, with a meaning look, "you know that there may be motives sufficient to induce Lord Danemore to entertain some

slight angry feelings towards you and your father at this moment."

Alice blushed very deeply, and looked up with surprise, saying, "What motives do you mean, Langford?"

"I mean on account of his son," replied Langford.

"I did not know," replied Alice, ingenuously, "that either you or anybody else but my father knew aught of that business till to-night."

"Several persons knew it," replied Langford; "and though I do not mean to excuse Lord Danemore, yet we must allow something for anger; and I think that such was his motive."

"Oh, that it certainly was," replied Alice, "for the attorney did not scruple to acknowledge it; but I did not think myself justified in mentioning it even to you, Langford."

"I do not mean to excuse Lord Danemore's conduct," said Langford. "It was unjust and unkind; but perhaps it was consistent with human nature, and certainly was consistent with all I know of his nature, which is quick, vehement, and passionate, if we may believe one half of what is said. But, after all, very likely this lawyer has outdone his instructions. However, Alice, as I said, he shall be disappointed. Learning that something of the kind was in agitation, I wrote several days ago to London, in order to be prepared to meet this matter. By this time my messenger is at the village, and brings with him a sufficient sum to discharge your father's obligation to Lord Danemore. For the last two or three days, Alice, I will acknowledge to you that my mind has been in a great state of doubt and agitation; the sum for which I have sent is more than one half of what I actually possess; but it was no fear in regard to that which made me at all hesitate. I only doubted whether I should tell you all I feel towards you before I offered this little assistance to your father or not. I thought, that if hope had deceived me, and Alice rejected my love, her father would then refuse to receive any aid from me, however needful it might be to him; and therefore, on the one hand, I fancied it might be better to mention the subject of the money first. But then, again, on the other hand, I thought, if I did so, it might place my Alice in embarrassing circumstances should she find herself obliged to

refuse a man who had come to her father's assistance in a moment of difficulty. I judged it would seem ungenerous of me even to ask her very soon after. In short, Alice, I gave way to hope and impatience, trusting that my Alice, by accepting me, would give me a right both to protect her and to assist her father."

"In short, Langford," replied Alice, placing her other hand upon his, "in short, you thought of everything that was generous, and kind, and noble, and acted accordingly."

"Nay, nay, not so, Alice," replied Langford; "but, of course, you have told your father what has passed between us."

"Immediately that man was gone," replied Alice, "I felt myself bound to do so, Langford; the more bound from all the distressing and agitating events which had occurred."

"You did quite right, my beloved," he answered. "What did he say?"

"He said everything that was kind and affectionate," replied Alice. "He said everything that I should like to hear said of one I love; but he said that he feared you would be disappointed when you heard all this bad news, and that I was bound in honour to set you free from all promises as much as if no proposal had ever been made. On his own part, he said that he should never raise any objections in regard to fortune; that he would never have done so even in his most prosperous days; but there was one question which he wished to ask regarding birth." Alice blushed, and cast down her eyes as she spoke. Then, raising them suddenly and frankly to Langford's face, she added, "It is one of his prejudices, you know, Henry. But, even if there should be any difficulty, his love for me and his esteem for you will make it but the matter of a moment."

Langford gazed in her face for an instant with a melancholy smile, which almost made her believe that her father's suspicions with regard to his history were correct. The next instant, however, whether he understood her meaning or not, he answered, "Set your mind at rest, dear Alice; my birth is as good as your own! Is your father gone to bed?"

"He went up stairs about half an hour before you came," said Alice; "but he is not asleep yet, I am sure. I sat up both to tell you all this and to put my

mind at ease about you and Lord Harold. You were so long absent that I was uneasy. If you had not given me your solemn promise not to quarrel with him, and if my father's grief and agitation had not occupied so much of my thoughts, I am afraid I should have been very foolish, and both terrified and unhappy at your not returning."

"I have been very busy about other things," replied Langford, the chilly recollection of all that had passed in the interval coming back upon him like a sudden gust of cold wind. "But my conversation with Lord Harold only lasted ten minutes. I do not mean to say that he would not willingly have quarrelled with me, but I would not quarrel with him; and I trust that my reputation for courage does not require to be sustained by any such silly contests. However, dear Alice," he continued, suddenly turning the conversation back again to its former subject, "however, if your father be not asleep, it may put his mind more at ease to hear that means are provided for meeting Lord Danemore's claim upon him; and you may also tell him, my Alice, in order to remove every shade of doubt, that, although my fortune be but scanty as it at present stands, yet there is good hope of its being greatly increased, and that my birth is certainly not inferior to that of her whose hand is already too valuable a gift to need the enhancement of superior station."

As he spoke he raised the hand he held tenderly but reverentially to his lips; for he felt that he was bound to double every outward token of respect at a moment when Alice announced to him that her own expectations of high fortune were disappointed, and that the rich heiress, who had thought a few hours before she had great wealth and broad lands to give, was now dowderless except in her beauty, her virtues, and her gentleness.

So he felt and so he acted; and Alice saw his feelings, and appreciated them to the full.

She rose then to go, but hesitated a moment as she wished him good-night, not knowing well how to express all the sensations that his conduct had produced. "Langford," she said, at length, "how shall I thank you? I will not attempt to do it now, the time is too short; but I shall find time, if endeavouring through life to make you happy be enough."

Langford could not resist it, and for a moment he pressed her to his bosom; adding, "Good-night, my Alice, good-night, my beloved. Hasten to your father before he is asleep, and I will remain for a few minutes here to write a note to the landlord of the Talbot, bidding him send up to-morrow morning early the packet which must have arrived to-night. I will tell him to address it to you; so that, before your father is awake to-morrow, you will have in your own hands the means of freeing him from all apprehension regarding this claim. I trust, too, dear Alice, the time will come when he will so much regard me in the light of a son as to permit me to examine into the matter of these mortgages; and I think I can show him, and others too, that his estates are far from being as much involved as they have been represented to be."

They parted; and after Langford had written the note he had spoken of, and had given it to a servant to take to the little town early in the morning, he retired to rest. He found in his chamber, busily engaged in laying out his toilet for the night, the old servant Halliday, who, during the whole time he had been confined in consequence of his wound, had attended him with the utmost care and attention, springing from a feeling that he was in some degree paying off a debt of his young mistress, in whose service that wound had been received. There was now in his countenance, though his nature was too respectful to suffer him to put any questions, an anxious sort of inquiringness which Langford could not resist. "It is not so bad, Halliday," he said. "Your excellent master has alarmed himself too much. All will go quite well, depend upon it."

The man made him a low bow with an air full of gratitude. "I am very much obliged to you, captain," he said. "I was frightened, I confess; for the steward, you see, told me at least three months ago. But, however, we servants have no right to be talking about such matters; and though it is all out of love and regard to Sir Walter and Mistress Alice, perhaps we had better hold our tongues."

"Perhaps so, Halliday," replied Langford; "and now, good-night; all will go well, depend upon it."

The man again bowed low and respectfully, and left the room, and Langford proceeded calmly to undress

himself; for—though his mind was oppressed, and the moment his thoughts were turned from the immediate subject of Sir Walter Herbert's affairs, they reverted naturally to the more painful topics with which they had before been engaged—he was not a man to suffer his feelings to overpower him, or to interrupt him in his ordinary habits and occupations. He felt deeply and strongly; but he was too much accustomed to feel deeply and strongly to suffer the emotions of his mind greatly to affect his corporeal demeanour. It is those who feel by fits and starts alone that give full way to sudden emotions. Langford could feel as poignantly as any one. He did feel as deeply and as poignantly as any one could feel at that moment, and yet he proceeded with his ordinary preparations for repose as if nothing had occurred to affect his feelings or to shake his heart. He ended by kneeling and commending himself and those he loved to the care of the Great Protector; and then lay down to rest, but not to sleep. That he could not command; and for many an hour he remained with his right arm bent under his head, his eyes cast upward through the darkness, peopling vacancy with strange shapes, and suffering imagination to suggest to him many a melancholy and many a painful image, which, after all, were not so dark and gloomy as the reality soon proved to be. The sky was beginning to turn gray with the morning light when he first closed his eyes. He started up again, however, in another moment, and then lay awake till it was broad daylight. Perceiving that such was the case, he was about to rise; but then a degree of drowsiness came over him; and, yielding to it for a moment, it took possession of him quite, and he fell into a deep sleep.

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## CHAPTER X.

DAY had long dawned, as we have said, ere Langford woke; and even then he awoke not of himself, nor till the servant Halliday had twice called him by name, standing close by his bedside, and looking upon him with an expression of much interest indeed, but with a face from which all colour was banished, apparently by fear and agitation.

"Master Langford!" he said, "Master Langford! No guilty man ever slept so sound as that. Poo, nonsense! Captain Langford, I say!"

Langford woke and looked up, demanding what was the matter.

"Why, sir," replied the servant, "here is good old Gregory Myrtle, the landlord of the Talbot, wants to speak with you immediately. I met him, as I was going up to the village, coming down here as fast as he could roll."

"Then you have not got the packet I sent for?" said Langford, coolly.

"He has got it, sir, safe," replied Halliday; "but he would not give it up, for he was coming on to you himself."

"He should have given it as he was directed," said Langford. "Tell him to wait; I will see him when I am dressed."

"But he says, sir, that he must see you directly; that his business is of the greatest importance; that there is not a moment to lose."

"Oh, then, send him up," said Langford, "if the matter be so pressing as that."

Halliday instantly disappeared, as if he thought that too much time had been wasted already; and, while Langford proceeded to rise, good Gregory Myrtle was heard creaking and panting up the stairs as fast as his vast rotundity would let him. His face, too, was pale, if pale it ever could be called; and he was evidently in a great state of agitation, though the jolly habitual laugh still remained, and was heard before he was well within the door of Langford's room.

"Haw, haw, haw!" he cried, as he laid down the expected packet before Langford. "Lord a' mercy, Master Harry, this is a terrible business!" he continued. "Well, I never did think—however, it's all nonsense, I know;" and he again burst into a loud laugh, ending abruptly in the midst, and staring in Langford's face as if for a reply.

"Well, good Gregory," replied Langford, who in the mean time had broken open the seals of the packet, and seen that various bills of exchange which it contained, together with other equivalents for money, were all right; "well, good Master Myrtle, what is it that is very terrible? What is it you did never think? What

is it that is all nonsense! I am in the dark, Master Myrtle."

"Gad's my life, sir, they won't let you be in the dark long," cried the landlord of the Talbot; "and I came down to enlighten you first, that you might not be taken by surprise."

"As to what?" said Langford, somewhat impatiently.

"Lord, sir! I thought that Halliday must have told you something, at least," replied Gregory Myrtle, "or that his face must, if not his tongue, for it's all black and white, like the broadside of the 'Hue and Cry;' but the matter is this," he added, after pausing to laugh a moment at his own joke, "it seems that poor Lord Harold, who was a good youth in his way, though he was somewhat sharp upon poachers, and deerstealers, and the like, was murdered last night upon the moor."

"Good God!" exclaimed Langford, clasping his hands.  
"Good God!"

"It's but too true, sir," continued Myrtle, throwing as much solemnity as he could into his jocund countenance. "It's but too true; and there's poor Lord Danemore, his father, distracted; and, for the matter of that, I think Sir Thomas Waller and Sir Matthew Scrope are as much distracted too; for, after having been with my lord since five o'clock this morning, they come down to my house, and begin examining witnesses and taking evidence, and sending here and there; and the end of it all is—for I heard them consulting over it through a chink in the door—they judge that you are the person who murdered him, only because that mad fellow, silly John Graves, came running down to the village last night for help, swearing he had seen you and Lord Harold with your swords drawn upon each other. So, while they were busy swearing in constables and all that, I thought it but friendly-like to come down here and tell you, in case you might think it right to get upon your horse's back, and gallop away till the business is over."

"Swearing in constables!" said Langford, without seeming to take notice of the worthy host's suggestion. "Why, they don't suppose my name is 'Legion,' do they? One constable, I should suppose, would be quite as useful as twenty."

"Ay, Master Harry," replied Gregory Myrtle; "but they vow that you are connected with the gentlemen



of the road who have been sporting round about here lately, and they are afraid of a rescue."

"Indeed," said Langford, "the sapient men! However, Master Myrtle, ring that little bell at the top of the stairs."

The silver handbell to which he pointed was immediately rung, and Halliday, who had remained half way down the stairs, was in the room in a moment. No sooner did he appear than Gregory Myrtle, who put his own construction upon Langford's coolness, exclaimed, "Quick, Master Halliday, quick! saddle the captain's horse for him!"

"No, no, Halliday," said Langford. "You are making a mistake, my good Master Myrtle. Take this packet, Halliday, and give it into Mistress Alice's own hands as soon as ever you can. I am going out with Master Myrtle here upon this business, which I see you have heard of. What may be the result of these foolish people's foolish suspicions, I cannot tell; but do what you can, Halliday, to keep the matter from the ears of Sir Walter and Mistress Alice as long as you can. Warn the other servants too; for there is no use of adding fresh vexation to that which your master and mistress are already suffering. You must all know very well that I have nothing to do with this business, and can make that clear very soon. Say, therefore, that I have gone out for a few hours, but left that packet for Mistress Alice, with my best wishes. Now, good Gregory Myrtle, go back to your inn, and tell Sir Thomas Waller and Sir Matthew Scrope that I will be with them in five minutes, as soon as I have dressed myself."

Our host of the Talbot pursued the directions he had received, rolled down the stairs, and laboured along the road towards the village, with his surprise and admiration both excited by the extraordinary coolness and self-possession displayed by Langford under such circumstances. By the time he had reached the middle of the bridge, he perceived a great number of people issuing from the door of his own house; and, ere he was half way up the street of the little town, he encountered ten or twelve constables and special constables, headed by the two magistrates in person. No sooner did he approach than the stentorian voice of Sir Thomas Waller—all unlike the dulcet notes of Sacha-

rissa's lover—was heard to exclaim, "Take him into custody, Jonathan Brown!"

"Where hast thou been, Gregory Myrtle, Gregory Myrtle?" exclaimed, in softer tones, almost in the same moment, the voice of Sir Matthew Scrope.

"You have been aiding and abetting felony!" cried Sir Thomas.

"You have been warning the guilty to escape!" said Sir Matthew.

"You have been helping the lion to fly from his pursuers!" said Sir Thomas.

"You have been proditoriously giving information of our secret councils!" said Sir Matthew.

"It is being an accessory after the fact!" said his companion.

"It is misprision of treason!" said the other.

"It is levying war against the king!" shouted Sir Thomas.

"It is a jail delivery!" cried the head constable, determined not to be outdone by his betters.

"Haw, haw, haw!" exclaimed Gregory Myrtle, laying his two hands upon his fat stomach, "what is the matter with your worships?"

"Hast thou not gone down on purpose," said Sir Matthew Scrope, "to warn Harry Langford, alias Captain Langford, alias Master Harry, to evade and escape the pursuit of justice, by flying out of the back door while we are approaching the front? Hast thou not done this, Gregory Myrtle? and wo be unto thee if he have so escaped! Take him into custody, I say!"

"Well, your worships," said Myrtle, beginning to look a little rueful under the hands of the constables, "I have been down to Master Harry, I own it; but I went on other business that I had to do with him. Does not everybody know that I had a packet down for him by a special messenger yesterday-night, with orders to deliver it into his own hands? and if I did talk with him this morning of what was going on, did he not send his compliments to your worships, and bid me say that he would be up with you in five minutes, as soon as he had got his clothes on!"

"Poo! nonsense, man!" exclaimed Sir Thomas Walter, growing red in the face. "Do you think we are fools, to be taken in with such a story as that? Are you fool enough yourself to think that he will come?"

"I say, as sure as I am a living man, he will come!" said Gregory Myrtle. "Ay, more, my masters," he continued, after giving a glance towards the Manor House, "I say, there he is coming."

All eyes were instantly turned in the direction in which his own had been bent the moment before, and the figure of a man, which seemed to have just issued out of the gates of the park, was seen walking with a slow calm step along the road towards the village. The magistrates, the constables, and the multitudinous crowd which followed them, all stood in silence and what we may call *thunderstruckness*, so little credence had they given to the assurances of Gregory Myrtle; for, let it be remembered, that the first effect produced by an accusation against any one, upon vulgar minds, is to lead them at once to condemn him. I am afraid there is something in the human heart that loves the act of condemnation; an act which either gratifies malignity or vanity.

However that may be, the party assembled in the streets of the little town could not believe their eyes, and, indeed, would not believe their eyes long after the form of Henry Langford, a form with which many of them were perfectly acquainted, had become distinctly visible, approaching with slow calm steps towards the spot where they were gathered together. The matter, however, could no longer be doubted; and the magistrates stood still, not knowing very well how to act in such unusual circumstances.

Henry Langford, in the mean time, approached without the slightest appearance of hesitation or dismay at the sight of the formidable phalanx which they presented. Walking up to the magistrates with the calm and graceful dignity which characterized all his actions, he bowed slightly, saying, "I am told, gentlemen, that a most distressing occurrence has taken place, and that you imagine there is some cause for supposing that I am implicated in this matter. Now, with your leave, gentlemen, we will go to the inn, as this is no place for discussing such subjects, and we will there investigate the matter accurately. Doubtless, you have had good reason for attributing to me the commission of a crime; but some person or another must have gone out of the way to insinuate or to urge such a charge against me; and who it is that has been kind enough and liberal

enough to do so, I shall make it my business to discover, in order to punish him as he deserves."

Langford concluded somewhat sternly; and the magistrates, entirely taken by surprise, looked rather foolish, and began to imagine that they might have been too hasty in their conclusions. There was a tone and an air, too, in the person whom they had suspected, which forbade all high words or violent measures. He spoke to them as certainly their equal, if not their superior; and there was so much of the consciousness of innocence in his whole demeanour, that it was very difficult to conceive that their suspicions were justified.

Not knowing well what to reply, they followed his suggestion in silence, the one walking on one side of him, and the other on the other. By the time they reached the Talbot, however, they began to recover from the effect of his presence; and Sir Thomas Waller, with what he conceived to be wise foresight and presence of mind, gave the chief constable a hint in a whisper to guard the doors well, and to take care that the prisoner did not escape. They did not, however, venture to treat him as a prisoner in any other respect; and, walking up into the room where they had held their investigation, he sat down with them at the table, and begged in a grave but not sarcastic tone that they would have the goodness to let him know on what grounds they for a moment conceived that he had had any share in the unfortunate death of Lord Harold.

The magistrates looked to their clerk, who had remained behind, putting the evidence in order while they had proceeded with the constables for the purpose of arresting Langford. The clerk, who, upon the whole, seemed a sensible little man, proceeded, as it was very common in those days, to take the whole business into his hands, and recapitulated coolly, but civilly, to Langford the heads of all the evidence that had been taken.

Langford now discovered that the charge against him was much more serious than he had at first imagined. He found that, in the first place, several persons had deposed that silly John Graves, whose adherence to truth was well known, had come down to the town in great agitation, begging for help to stop Lord Harold and Master Harry Langford from killing each other. It was proved, also, by the horseboys from the Manor House, that Lord Harold, after having been in the park with

Master Langford, had returned for his horse about the same time that the other had returned; that the young nobleman had ridden away very slowly, and that Langford, after proceeding part of the way towards the village, had suddenly come back, mounted his horse, and ridden away very rapidly; that he had been absent till between ten and eleven o'clock at night, and that his horse was evidently fatigued, and had been hard ridden. Several people, too, had seen him pass at different times and on several parts of the road leading to the moor; and, in short, there was quite sufficient evidence to prove that a quarrel had taken place between Lord Harold and himself; that they had both gone towards the same spot at the same time, and that he had been absent a sufficient number of hours to commit the deed with which he was charged, and to return.

As the evidence was recapitulated, the worthy magistrates gained greater and greater confidence every moment; and at length Sir Matthew Scrope exclaimed, "If this is not sufficient to justify us in committing the prisoner, I do not know what is."

"Not, perhaps, in committing him, your worship," said the clerk, whose philology was choice without being very accurate; "but certainly in remanding him."

"Why, I did not exactly mean to say committing," rejoined the subservient magistrate; "remanding was the word I meant to use; but where can we remand him to? If we remand him to the county jail, Justice Holdhim will take the matter out of our hands, and we shall lose all credit with the good earl for arresting the murderer of his son."

"Would it not be as well," said the clerk, "to take him up at once to the castle? It is not improbable that the noble earl might like to examine him himself; and you can keep him confined there till you have obtained further evidence to justify his committal."

"A very good thought, a very good thought," cried Sir Thomas Waller, rubbing his hands. "He shall be placed in my carriage, with a constable on each side, and we will follow in yours, Sir Matthew, with the other constables on horseback."

Langford had listened in silence to the conversation between the magistrates and their clerk; and, though he evidently began to perceive that the affair would be more serious and disagreeable than he had anticipated,

he could not refrain from smiling at the arrangement of the stately procession that was to carry him to Dane-more Castle. He resolved, however, to make one effort to prevent the execution of a purpose which would, of course, on many accounts, be disagreeable to him; and he therefore interposed, as the clerk was about to leave the room, saying, "You are rather too hasty, gentlemen, in your conclusions, and I think you had better be warned before you commit an act which you may be made to repent of—"

"Do you mean to threaten us, sir?" exclaimed Sir Thomas Waller. "Take those words down, clerk. Take those words down."

"I mean to threaten you with nothing," replied Langford, "but the legal punishment to which bad or ignorant magistrates may be subjected for the use, or rather misuse, of their authority. You will remark—and I beg that the clerk may take these words down—that one half of the matter urged against me rests upon the reported words of a madman, who has not been brought forward even himself."

"You would not have us take the deposition of an innocent, a born natural?" demanded Sir Matthew Scrope.

"His evidence is either worth something or worth nothing," replied Langford. "You rest mainly upon his testimony reported by others, which is, of course, worth nothing; and yet you will not take his testimony from his own mouth, when I inform you that, if it were so taken, he would prove that, though Lord Harold chose to quarrel with me, which I do not deny, that I positively refused to draw my sword upon him, even when he drew his upon me."

"That might be," said the clerk, "to take more sure vengeance in a private way. Their worships have, on the contrary, to remark, that you have not in any way attempted to account for the space of time you were absent from the Manor House last night. Neither have you stated where you were, or what was your occupation; and, without meaning to say anything uncivil, sir, let me say that there have been a great many nights while you remained at the inn which might require accounting for also. Their worships have not judged harshly of you, nor even given attention to suspicious circumstances, till they found that the whole of your conduct was suspicious." This was spoken while stand-

ing beside the chair of Sir Matthew Scrope ; and, after whispering a few words in his ear, the clerk left the room.

Langford remained, with his eyes gloomily bent upon the table, without speaking to either of his companions, busy with varied thoughts and feelings, which began to come upon him thick and many, to weigh him down, and to oppress him. During the early part of the disagreeable business in which he had been engaged, he had thought solely of his own innocence, and of the absurdity, as it seemed to him, of the charge against him ; but, as the matter went on, other considerations forced themselves upon his attention. He was conscious he could give no account of where he had been on the preceding night when the murder was committed ; and yet he felt that he was called upon strongly to do so, not for the purpose of freeing himself from suspicion, but with a view to bring the real murderer to justice. Yet how could he reveal any part of what he knew without bringing down destruction on the head of Franklin Gray, who had no share in the deed ; who, at the very time it was committed, was engaged in serving him even at the risk of life ; to whom he was bound by so many ties of gratitude, and whose good qualities, though they did certainly not serve to counterbalance his crimes, yet rendered him a very different object in the eyes of Langford from such men as Wiley and Hardcastle ! At all events, he felt that it was not for him to bring a man to the scaffold who had saved his life on more than one occasion, and who had shown himself always willing to peril his own in order to procure a comparatively trifling benefit to him.

Mingled with all these feelings was deep and bitter sorrow for Lord Harold ; and thus many conflicting emotions, all more or less painful, together with the most painful of all, the knowledge that he could not do his duty with that straightforward candour and decision which, in all other situations of life, he had been accustomed to show, kept him in stern and somewhat gloomy silence.

The magistrates, in the mean while, conversed apart in a low voice, Sir Thomas Waller delighted with the plan they were about to pursue, and anticipating great credit with Lord Danemore for the arrest of his son's murderer ; while Sir Matthew Scrope, who seemed to

stand in considerable awe of the old nobleman, declared that he never half liked to come across the earl, who was so fierce, and fiery, and imperious. In about a quarter of an hour the clerk returned, and announced that all was ready; and Langford, surrounded by a complete mob of constables, suffered himself to be placed in the rumbling carriage of Sir Thomas Waller, and was borne away towards Danemore Castle.

The two magistrates followed in the carriage of Sir Matthew; and the train of constables, mounted on all sorts of beasts, came after, swelling the procession; while good Gregory Myrtle stood at his door, declaring that he never saw such a piece of folly in his life; and the poor chambermaid, dissolved in tears, wiped her eyes and vowed it was impossible that so handsome a young man could murder anybody.

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## CHAPTER XI.

AFTER a slow progress of between two and three hours—along roads which in those days frequently tossed the heavy carriage wheels high in the air over some large unbroken stone, and still more frequently suffered them to repose in deep beds of sand or mud, till the efforts of four strong Flanders horses had dragged them forth—the vehicle which contained Henry Langford gained the brow of Danemore hill, and came within sight of the building which, in that part of the country, was known under the name of The Castle.

This view was obtained from the side of the park, which lay in front, and which was separated from the road merely by a low park paling, crowned with open palisading at the top. A part of the park itself lay between the mansion and the road, which were at the distance of about three quarters of a mile from each other, the ground sloping with a thousand fanciful undulations, and covered with short turf of a rich bright green in all the dells and hollows, though becoming slightly brown upon the tops of the knolls, where the fierce summer sun, like the withering glare of the great world, had already taken off the freshness of the vegetation.



Scattered here and there were groups of old hawthorns, contorted into many a strange and rugged form; while on either hand appeared clumps of fine old trees, the chestnut, the beech, and the oak. The latter were seen gradually deepening and clustering together to the right and left of the house, till they joined a thick wood, through which every here and there stood forth, dark and defined amid the tender green of the other plants, the sombre masses of the pine and fir; like some of those stern memories of sorrow, of sin, or of privation, which are to be found in almost every human heart, and which still make themselves known in gloomy distinctness amid the freshest scenes and brightest occupations of life.

In the midst, backed by that thick wood, stood the house or castle, as it was called, and the name was not ill deserved. It was an irregular pile of building, erected in different ages by its different lords, and showing the taste of the various individuals who had possessed it, as well as of the various ages in which it had been constructed. On the left was an old unornamented tower, in the simplest style of the old Norman architecture. It was like one of the plain towers of some of the Kentish churches, with square cut windows, or rather loopholes, under a semicircular arch, which denoted the original form. It was crowned by a plain parapet with a high conical roof.

Then came a long range of buildings in a much later style of architecture, with oriel windows, and a good deal of rich stone carving and ornamental work; then two massive towers projecting considerably before the rest of the façade, and joined to it by two corridors, through each of which was pierced a gateway, under a pointed arch; and then again, as the building sunk into the wood, upon the right were more towers and masses of heavy masonry, united in general by long lines of building of a lighter and more graceful character. On the older parts the ivy had been suffered to grow, though not very luxuriantly. The space in front, too, was kept clear of trees; and even as the carriage passed along, at the distance of nearly a mile, the wide esplanade on which the castle stood, with a part of the barbican, which had been suffered to remain, were distinctly visible.

The constables who sat with Langford in the carriage

of Sir Thomas Waller gazed up towards an edifice which the people of the country but seldom approached, with feelings of awe and reverence. The eyes of Langford, too, were fixed upon it, but with sensations which they little understood. All that they remarked was, that he kept his eyes fixed upon the castle steadfastly during the whole time that it was visible as they passed along in front; that he looked at it calmly, though gravely; and that, when he had done, he raised his head as if waking from a reverie, and then suddenly turned and gazed from the other window, where a wide and beautiful view was seen spread out below, reaching to the old Manor House, and the wooded banks and hills beyond.

The carriage then rolled on, and, winding round under the park, entered by a castellated lodge, and drove slowly up to the mansion, the vehicles passing under the arches of the two large towers which projected from the centre of the building. A loud-tongued bell gave notice of their coming, and three or four servants, fat, pampered, and saucy, made their appearance to answer its noisy summons.

Sir Thomas Waller was the first to speak, and, with an air of importance, he demanded immediately to see the earl. One servant looked at another, and he who seemed to be the chief porter replied shortly that that was impossible, for the earl had gone out.

"Gone out!" cried Sir Thomas, in surprise. "How? where?"

"He is gone out on horseback," replied the man; "that is how, sir; and as to where, I fancy he is gone to the moor where my young lord was killed."

"But we must, at least we ought, to see my lord the earl," said Sir Matthew Scrope, "for we have brought up a prisoner for him to examine."

"I can't say anything about that," replied the man, with a sort of sullen incivility; "my lord is out, but I will go and ask Mistress Bertha if you like."

"I do not know what Mistress Bertha can do in the matter," said Sir Thomas Waller.

"Oh! she can do anything she likes," replied the man, with a sneer, to which he did not dare to give full expression.

"Well, ask her; ask her, then," said Sir Matthew; "you know who I am; you know I was with the earl

three or four hours this morning. You know I am a justice of the peace, and one of the quorum."

Sir Matthew did not seem by this announcement to raise his dignity greatly in the eyes of the servant, who walked away with slow and measured steps to make the proposed application. He returned in about five minutes, saying that Mistress Bertha had replied that, as it might be a long time before the earl returned, the magistrates had better leave the prisoner locked up there, and come back in the evening about the hour of his lordship's supper.

Sir Matthew Scrope and Sir Thomas Waller looked at each other. There were some points in this suggestion which they did not much like; but then, again, the magical words, "His lordship's supper," which were coupled in their imagination with fine and exquisite wines from foreign lands, fat haunches, rich sauces, and many another delicacy and luxury which rumour declared to be prevalent in Danemore Castle, rapidly removed all objections from their minds; and, after a few minutes' consultation between them, they determined to obey to the letter.

The next object of consideration was how to secure their prisoner, and in what room to place him; but their conference on that point was soon cut short by the porter, who interrupted them by saying, "You had better leave all that to Mistress Bertha; for, depend upon it, she will put him where she likes herself, and most likely has settled it all already. The best way will be to bring him in and go to her. She is in the long gallery."

Although the two magistrates did not at all approve of the whole business being taken out of their hands by a woman, they nevertheless yielded with some symptoms of displeasure; and Langford, being made to descend from the carriage, was escorted by the two constables through a long dim entrance passage, which led into a handsome vestibule beyond. He offered no resistance to their will: he made no observation; he asked no question; but with a calm and thoughtful dignity, which had its effect even upon the pampered servants of the castle, he walked on looking casually at the different objects he passed, as if almost indifferent to the part he was himself acting in the scene.

From the vestibule a handsome flight of stone stairs, lighted by a tall painted window, led up to a gallery ex-

tending on either side for about seventy yards; and up these stairs Langford was led, following the two magistrates, who went on with slow steps, preparing to give Mistress Bertha, the housekeeper, a just notion of their dignity and importance. At the top of the stairs they were met by that personage herself, dressed as we have before described her, except that her broad white coif was no longer surmounted by the black veil with which she covered her head when she went abroad. Her thin aquiline features might have gained an additional degree of sharpness; her sallow skin was, if anything, more sallow; and the cold severe expression which always reigned in her countenance was now increased to a degree of stern bitterness, which somewhat humbled the tone of the two magistrates.

They approached her, however, with a very tolerable degree of pomposity; and Sir Thomas Waller introduced himself, and then presented Sir Matthew Scrope, announcing to her that they were magistrates of the county, and two of the quorum. As he spoke the attention of the housekeeper wandered beyond the two worshipful gentlemen altogether, and was attracted to the prisoner who followed them. There was something in his good looks, his calm and dignified demeanour, his apparel, or his expression of countenance, which made the thin eyelids of Mistress Bertha's eyes expand from the bright dark orbs they covered at the first moment they lighted on him, and she demanded, "Is that the prisoner?"

Sir Thomas Waller replied that it was; and then recapitulated what he had been saying in regard to the dignity of himself and Sir Matthew Scrope.

"Yes, yes," replied Mistress Bertha, with her slight foreign accent, "I know who you are, both of you; and now you have nothing to do but to leave the prisoner here till the earl comes home. You can return at his supper hour. I do not know that he will eat with you himself; but, if he do not, meat shall be provided for you."

"There can be no reason, madam," said Sir Matthew Scrope, "why the earl should not sup with us; we have supped with men of as high rank, I trow."

"When a man has lost his only son," said the housekeeper, sharply, "is that no reason why he should not sup with two fat country knights, to whom his sorrow

and his presence would only bring gloom and stiffness! Better sup by yourselves, and eat, and drink, and make merry as you are accustomed to do."

"Gadzooks!" said Sir Thomas Waller, in a low voice to his companion, "I think the old lady is right; but, madam," he added, in a louder tone, "we must be made sure of the safety of our prisoner."

"Leave that to me, leave that to me," replied the housekeeper, shortly. "Follow me, Williams and Hanbury, to guard the prisoner; and you, John Porter, come on too; come with me, young gentleman," she added, speaking to Langford in a more benign tone. "You do not look as if you would commit a murder; but, God knows, looks are deceitful things. Come with me."

"But, madam, we have no authority," interrupted Sir Matthew Scrope.

"Authority!" exclaimed the housekeeper, fiercely raising up her tall thin person to its utmost height; "who talks of authority in this house! You may well say you have no authority, for you lost it all the moment you crossed that threshold. No one has authority here but the earl, and, when he is absent, myself, now that that poor boy is gone," she added, while a bright drop rose into her eyes, sparkled upon the black lashes that fringed them, and then fell upon the sallow skin beneath. "I trust in God you did not kill him; young gentleman; for, if you did, you committed a great crime."

"Indeed I did not, madam," replied Langford; "I should sooner have thought of killing myself."

"I believe you, I believe you," replied the housekeeper; "but yet I must have you as safely guarded as if you had. If you want to see where I put him," she continued, speaking to the magistrates in a somewhat gentler tone than she had hitherto used, "you may come with me; there is a room which no one ever enters but my lord and myself; it is high up in the oldest tower; even if he could get through the windows, which he cannot, there is a fall of sixty feet below, clear down. But come and see it if you will, and you shall have some refreshment after."

Carrying a large key which she had held in her hand from the beginning of the conversation, she led the way to the end of the gallery in which they stood. Then, passing through another handsome corridor, she as-

cended a staircase in the older part of the building, which brought them to an anteroom opening into a large bedchamber with windows on each side; and through the western window, and close to it, might be seen projecting the heavy mass of the large square tower that we have mentioned in describing the building. A small low door was exactly opposite to them as they entered, and to the lock of this Mistress Bertha applied the key. It turned heavily, and with difficulty, as if not often used; and the door moving back, gave entrance into a lofty and cheerful chamber, lighted by four small windows.

The strength of the door and the height of the windows showed at once that escape from that chamber was impossible; and the magistrates, holding in remembrance the refreshments which their somewhat ungracious companion had promised them, expressed themselves perfectly satisfied with the security of their prisoner. Langford was accordingly desired to enter the place of his confinement, and did so at once, merely turning to address the housekeeper as he passed. "Madam," he said, "I am sure you will be good enough to give my compliments to Lord Danemore whenever he returns, and to inform him, first, that I assert my perfect innocence of the charge which these two worthy persons have somewhat too hastily brought against me; and, secondly, that I beg he will take the most prompt and immediate means for investigating the whole affair, as it will be unpleasant for me to submit to this treatment long; and there are plenty of persons in the neighbourhood who will see that justice is done me."

The housekeeper made no other reply than by bowing her head; but when Langford had entered, and she had shut and locked the door, she turned sharply and contemptuously upon the magistrates, saying, "He did not do it! he never did it! you will make yourselves a laughing-stock in the country."

Sir Thomas Waller was about to reply, but she silenced him at once by ordering one of the servants who followed her to have the cold meats laid out in the little hall, and find the butler for a stoup of Burgundy. A proposal made by Sir Matthew Scrope to leave two of the constables behind in the anteroom she cut short less pleasantly, telling him that she would have no con-

stables in her master's house except such as were intended to be thrown out of the window.

By this time both magistrates began to find out that it was to no purpose to contest matters in Danemore Castle with this imperious dame; and they accordingly followed her in silence back to the head of the great stairs. There she made them over to the care of one of the menservants, who in turn led them to the lesser hall, where a collation was set before them which well repaid them for all their patient endurance.

In the mean while Langford had remained in the solitary chamber which had been assigned to him. As soon as the door was closed he took nine or ten turns up and down the room in a state of much agitation; then gazed out for a moment from each of the windows by which it was lighted; and then sat down at the table, and placed his hands for several minutes before his eyes. It is not needful to enter into any detailed account of his feelings; his situation was particularly painful in every respect; and though he was not one of those who give way to each transient emotion, something might well be allowed for discomfort, anxiety, and indignation. When he had thus paused for a few minutes, thinking over his fate, he lifted his eyes and gazed round the chamber which served as his place of confinement, seeming to take accurate note of all it contained.

The room itself was a cheerful and a pleasant room, with a vaulted ceiling richly ornamented; while the thick walls of the tower were lined with oak, very deep in hue, and finely carved with Gothic tracery. The form of the chamber was perfectly square, and its extent might be four-and-twenty feet each way. The furniture, too, was good, though ancient, and of the same carved oak as the panelling. It consisted in a large table and a smaller one, eight or nine large high-backed chairs, and several curious carved cabinets. But the objects which most attracted the attention of Langford were two small panels, distinct from the rest of the wainscoting, and ornamented in such a way as to show that they were not at all intended to be concealed, with a small pointed ogee canopy above each, similar to that which surmounted the door by which he had entered, but only smaller in size. In each of these panels was a keyhole surrounded by an intricate steel guard; and

it was evident that each covered the entrance of one of those cupboards in the wall in which our remote ancestors took so much delight.

Besides the door by which he had entered, there was a smaller one on the opposite side of the room, leading, as Langford conceived, to a staircase in one of the large buttresses; and as he had been a prisoner before, and had found it useful to know all the outlets of his temporary abode, his first action, after gazing round the room, was to approach that second door, and try whether it was or was not locked. It was firmly closed, however; and he took his way back towards his seat, pausing by the way to examine the two small closets we have mentioned, and murmuring to himself, as he did so, "This is very strange!"

As he spoke he drew forth from his vest the key which had been given him on the preceding night by Franklin Gray, and put it in the lock, but did not turn it, though it fitted exactly. He withdrew it again almost instantly, and replaced it in his bosom, then folded his arms upon his chest, and took one or two turns up and down the room, pausing at every second step, and gazing thoughtfully upon the floor.

By the time he had been half an hour in this state of confinement he heard a key placed in the lock of the door by which he had entered. In another moment it opened, and the tall, stately figure of Mistress Bertha appeared. In one hand she carried several books, and in the other some writing paper, with a small inkhorn suspended on her finger. She shut the door after her, but did not attempt to lock it; and then laying down the books and implements for writing on the table, she turned round and gazed fixedly in Langford's face.

"Have we ever met before?" she said at length. "Your face is familiar to me. It comes back like something seen in a dream. Have we ever met before?"

"If we have," replied Langford, "it must have been many years ago, when the face of the child was very different from the face of the man."

She still gazed at him, and, after a considerable pause, said, "I have brought you some books that you may read, and wherewithal to write, if you like it. In return for this, write me down your name."

Langford smiled, and, taking up the pen, wrote down his name in a bold, free hand. The woman gazed at



him as he did so; then carried her eye rapidly to the writing. A bright and intelligent smile shone for a moment upon her thin pale lip, and she said, "Enough! enough! that is quite enough. You have been taught to believe that I have wronged you more than I have wronged you; and although I have given you much good counsel and much true information, you have doubted me, and have not fully trusted me. I tell you now, and I tell you truly, that I have not wronged you, at least as far as my knowledge of right and wrong goes, and therefore I am still willing to do all that I can to serve you. The history of the past I may tell you at some future time, and it will show you that I wronged others less than they thought I did. But there is one whom I will not name who has wronged you and yours deeply; and I know his nature, I know human nature too well, not to be sure that implacable hatred and constant persecution is the offspring of such acts, rather than sorrow, remorse, and atonement. It was on that account that I bade you never come here. It was on that account that I bade you fly his presence. Fate, however, has brought you here at a moment when the mortal agony of losing the only creature he really loved may yet tame his fierce heart and bend his iron will. I can do but little for you, for I am bound by an oath; an oath which has bound me for many years; but fate, which has brought you here, and has wrought an extraordinary thing in your behalf, may yet do much. I will leave it to its course. But with regard to your own conduct, beware! I warn you to beware. Choose well your moment, and of all things be not hasty. But hark, what is that I hear below? There are his horse's feet, and I must leave you. Thank God, those idiot justices are gone."

"Yet one moment," said Langford, as she turned to depart: "I may have thought that you wronged me and mine, but I have not doubted, I have not suspected you, as you suppose. On the contrary, in many things, as you may have seen, I have followed your advice; in others, the advice of one whom I was more strictly bound to confide in."

"Ay, and it was she who taught you to believe, it was she who was weak enough to believe herself, that I had been guilty of that which I would scorn."

"No!" exclaimed Langford, "no! You mistake;

she never did believe you guilty. She owned that once, in a moment of anger, she implied so ; but she did you justice in that respect through the whole of her life. She told me more than once, too, that she had herself seen you and assured you that she did not doubt you as you imagined ; that, anger having passed away, justice and right judgment had returned."

"But all her words were cold," said Bertha, "and all her letters had something of restraint in them."

"Consider her situation," said Langford, in return ; "and remember that she had some cause to blame, as yourself acknowledged ; though, in regard to other things, she might have done you injustice."

"She did bitter injustice to herself," replied the woman, "and drove me to attach myself to others, though I would fain have attached myself to her ; and, having done so, would have served her with my heart's blood ; but I must not linger ; I will see you again ere long ; farewell !" and, thus saying, she left him, locking the door behind her.

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## CHAPTER XII.

LANGFORD had not been left five minutes alone ere the voices of persons rapidly approaching caught his ear. At first he imagined that they proceeded from the side by which he himself had entered ; but the moment after he became convinced that they came from the direction of the other door, which, as he justly supposed, communicated with a staircase in one of the large butresses. At first, of course, the sounds were indistinct ; but, a moment after, a key was placed in the lock, and a loud deep voice was heard exclaiming, "I will stop for nothing till I have seen him face to face ! Where is this murderer of my son ?"

The door was thrown violently open before those words were fully spoken, and the Earl of Danemore himself stood before the prisoner.

He was a tall, handsome, powerful man, wide-chested, broad-shouldered, and still very muscular, without being at all corpulent. He might be sixty-three or sixty-four

years of age, and his hair was snowy white. His eyebrows, however, and his eyelashes, both of which were long and full, were as black as night. There was many a long deep furrow on his brow, and a sort of scornful but habitual wrinkle between the nostril of the strong aquiline nose and the corner of his mouth. On his right cheek appeared a deep scar, round, and of about the size of a pistol ball; and on the chin was a longer scar, cutting nearly from the lip down into the throat and neck. He was dressed in a suit of plain black velvet, with the large riding boots and heavy sword which were common about fifteen or sixteen years before the period of which we now speak, but which were beginning by this time to go out of fashion.

On entering the room his teeth were hard set together, his brow contracted till the large thick eyebrows almost met, and his whole air fierce and agitated. His quick eyes darted round the room in a moment, and alighted upon Langford, who turned and faced him at once.

The moment, however, that their looks met, a strange and sudden change came over the whole appearance of Lord Danemore. He paused abruptly, and stood still in the middle of the room, gazing in Langford's face, while the frown departed from his brow, and he raised his hand towards his head, passing it twice before his eyes, as if he fancied that some delusion had affected his sight. His lips opened as if he would have spoken, but for a moment or two no sounds issued forth; and the calm, quiet, steady gaze with which Langford regarded him seemed to trouble and agitate him.

"What is your name? what is your name?" he exclaimed, rapidly, when he could speak. "Who brought you here?"

"My name is Henry Langford," replied the prisoner. "An officer in the service of his majesty; and, if you seriously ask, my lord—for I suppose I have the honour of speaking to the Earl of Danemore—if you seriously ask who brought me hither, I have only to reply two very silly persons calling themselves magistrates, who have entertained, or rather manufactured, among themselves a charge against me for which there is not the slightest foundation."

"Henry Langford! Henry Langford!" repeated the earl, casting his eyes upon the ground and then raising them again to Langford's face, every line and feature

of which he seemed to scan with anxious care. "Pray, of what family are you?"

"My father," replied Langford, "was a gentleman of some property in England, of which property, however, I have been unjustly deprived;" and, as he spoke, he fixed his eyes steadfastly upon the earl; but that nobleman's countenance underwent no change, and he proceeded; "my mother was also a lady of some property—"

"Where were you born?" demanded the earl, quickly.

"Though your questions are rather unceremonious, my lord, for a perfect stranger," Langford replied, "I will not scruple to answer them. I was born in a small town in this country."

"Not in France?" demanded the earl, quickly. "I do not ask without a motive; not in France! Are you certain not in France?"

"Perfectly certain," replied Langford. "My mother's family, however, were French; related to the illustrious family of Beaulieu."

"So!" said the earl, "so! How nearly are you related to that family? are you sure not in France?"

"Quite certain," repeated Langford. "I have lived much in France, which may have given me some slight foreign accent; and as to my relationship to the Beaulieus, I can really hardly tell how near. I have only heard my mother say that she was nearly related to them."

"It cannot be! It cannot be!" said the earl, closing his eyes and looking down upon the ground. "Is your mother living?"

A cloud came over Langford's brow: "She is not," he said.

The earl again seemed interested. "How long has she been dead?" he asked.

"About two years," Langford replied, and thereupon the earl once more shook his head, saying, "It cannot be! You are very like the late Marquis of Beaulieu," he added, "extremely like; and, though circumstances have compelled me to discontinue my acquaintance with that family, I knew the marquis once, and loved him well. I could have almost fancied that you were his son, and for his sake I cannot regard you with any other eyes than those of kindness. But, yet, what do I say?" he continued, while his brow again grew dark.

"They tell me you have murdered my son, my only son. How strange, if the son of the man who had so nearly killed the father, should, five-and-twenty years after, have slain the son!"

"You forget, my lord, and you mistake altogether," replied Langford. "In the first place, I am not the son of the Marquis of Beaulieu; and, in the next place, I assure you most solemnly, by all I hold dear; I pledge you my honour as a gentleman and a soldier, and my oath as a Christian and a man, that I have had no more share in this unfortunate event than you have."

"I would willingly believe you," answered the earl, "most willingly, for yours is a countenance from which I have been accustomed to expect nothing but truth and honour. Yet why do these men accuse you? Why, if there be not proof as strong as truth itself, why do they dare to bring an accusation against one of your high house? Oh, young man! young man! if you have slain him by fraud or villany, I will take vengeance of you by making you the public spectacle, and giving you up to the rope and the scaffold; chains shall hang about you even in your death, and your bones shall whiten in the wind. But, if you have slain him foot to foot and hand to hand, you shall meet a father's vengeance in another way. Ay! old as I am, I will take your heart's blood, and you shall find that this arm has lost nothing of its skill and but little of its strength. You shall learn what a father's arm can do when heavy with the sword of the avenger!"

"Once more, my lord," replied Langford, calmly, "I assure you that I am perfectly innocent. I assure you that, neither fairly and openly, nor covertly and treacherously, have I had aught to do with your son's death. The sole ground for suspicion against me has been what I will not conceal from you, my lord, that, upon a slight quarrel between us, he drew his sword upon me in the park of Sir Walter Herbert."

"Ay, Sir Walter Herbert!" exclaimed the peer, with a bitter sneer; "the pitiful old fool! He and his fair dainty daughter, Mistress Alice, they would none of my son, would they not? He shall pay for it in prison, and she shall see him rot before her eyes. Ay, now I guess how it all is. She has found a lover in fair Master Henry Langford, has she? and he has murdered a rival who might have proved troublesome. They shall an-

swer for it, they shall answer for it! Ho! below there!" he continued, approaching the door. "Bring me up the papers which those two knights left!"

Langford suffered him to proceed with the wild and rapid starts to which the vehemence of his passions led him; but when he paused, the prisoner took up the conversation, saying, "I was about to tell you, my lord, that your son did seek a quarrel with me; did draw his sword upon me; did try to induce me to follow his example, but in vain."

"What!" interrupted the peer, "did you refuse to fight him? How was that? a soldier, and a man of your race?"

"I did refuse to fight him, my lord," replied Langford, "for particular reasons of my own. I have had many opportunities of showing that fear forms no part of my nature, and I am not at all apprehensive of ever being mistaken for a coward."

He spoke with a calm and easy dignity, slightly throwing back his head, while the fine-formed nostril expanded with a sense of honourable pride. The earl gazed upon him attentively, the angry fire that had been in his eyes gradually subsiding as he did so; and he repeated more than once, in a low voice, "So like! So strangely like!"

At that moment, with the rapidity of one accustomed to obey the orders of a quick and imperious master, a servant appeared bringing in the bundle of papers which contained the evidence collected against Langford at Moorhurst. The earl cast himself into a chair, spread the papers out upon the table, and ran his eye rapidly over them, one after another. Langford had also seated himself, and watched the proceedings of the earl attentively, though neither of them spoke for some minutes.

When the earl had done, he looked up in the prisoner's face, and, after pausing with a thoughtful air for several moments, he said, "This is a case of suspicion against you, but nothing more. I myself, the person most interested, cannot make more of it; and from what I see of you, from your face and from your family, I will add that I do not believe you guilty."

"My lord, you do me justice," replied Langford, "and it makes me right glad to see you so inclined. There was an old custom which was not without its value, for human nature cannot be wholly mastered even by the most consummate art; and I am now willing to re-

cur to the old custom, to give you further proof that you judge rightly of me. Let me be taken to the room where your poor son lies. I will place my hand upon his heart, and swear to my innocence. I do not suppose, my lord, that the blood would flow again if I were culpable; but I do believe that no man, conscious of such a crime as murder, could perform that act without betraying by his countenance the guilty secret within him. I am ready to perform it before any persons that you choose to appoint."

"Are you not aware," demanded the earl, sternly, "that the body has not been found?"

"Good God!" exclaimed Langford, his whole face brightening in a moment, "then perhaps he is living yet. This is the most extraordinary tale that ever yet was told; a man arrested, accused, wellnigh condemned for the murder of another who is probably alive. A thousand to one he is still alive! Oh, my lord, be comforted, be comforted!"

"You deceive yourself, young man," replied the earl, with a melancholy shake of the head, "you deceive yourself. His death is but too clearly proved. His white horse returned last night alone, with his own neck and the saddle all stained with blood. The road by Upwater Mere was found drenched with gore; with my child's gore! and his cloak was found among the beeches hard by, pierced on the left side with a pistol shot, which must have been fired close to his bosom, for the wadding had burnt the silk. It, too, was stiff with blood. There were traces of several horses' feet about, but no trace of where the body had been carried; though I myself—I, his father—have spent several hours in seeking the slightest vestige that might direct me. Doubtless it is thrown into the mere;" and as he spoke he covered his eyes with his hands, and remained for several minutes evidently overpowered with deep emotion, against which he struggled strongly, but in vain.

Langford, too, was moved; and after having waited in silence for several minutes, in the hope that the agitation which his companion suffered would pass away, he ventured to address some words of comfort to Lord Danemore; saying, "I am deeply grieved, my lord, that you have such cause for apprehension; but still I cannot help hoping that all these causes for believing the worst may prove fallacious, and that your son may yet be restored to you."

"No, no, sir! no!" replied the earl, "I will not deceive myself, nor do I wish to be deceived. Such evidence is too clear. I am not a child or a woman, that I cannot bear any lot assigned to me. I can look my fate in the face, however dark and frowning its brow may be, and can to say to it, 'Thou hast but power over me to a certain degree; over my mind thou canst not triumph; and even while thou wringest my heart and leavest my old age desolate, I can defy thee still!'"

Langford bent down his eyes upon the ground, and did not reply for several minutes. He did not approve the spirit in which those words were spoken, but yet it was not his task to rebuke or to admonish; and when he did reply, he again sought to instil hope.

"Your lordship says," he observed, at length, "that the evidence is too clear. It is certainly clear enough to justify great and serious apprehensions, but not to take away hope or to impede exertion. I remember having heard of an instance, which occurred in far distant climates, where the causes for supposing a person dead were much more conclusive than in the present instance. A sailor had left the ship to which he belonged, and wandered on shore in a place infested with pirates. He did not return. Boats were sent after him, and in tracing the course of one of the rivers up which he was supposed to have taken his way, his clothes were found bloody, torn, and cut with the blows of a sword; a leathern purse, which he was known to have carried full of money, was found farther on, devoid of its contents; and farther still a mangled and mutilated body, in which almost all his comrades declared they recognised his corpse; and yet, three years after that, he rejoined the ship to which he belonged, having made his escape from the party of robbers by whom he had been taken. The body which had been found was that of another man, though the clothes and the purse undoubtedly were his own.

While he spoke the earl turned deadly pale, gazed upon him for a moment or two with a straining eye, then suddenly started up, and without a word of reply left the room.

Langford at first seemed surprised, but smiled slightly as he saw him go; then calmly sat down at the table, took up the papers which the earl had left behind him, read over the evidence against himself, and wrote in the



margin a number of observations, wherever any strained or unjust conclusion seemed to have been drawn by the magistrates. He had been occupied in this manner about an hour when the earl again made his appearance. His manner was very different from what it had been on the previous occasion. There was a want of that fierce energy which had before characterized it; there was a doubtfulness, a hesitation, and a vagueness quite opposed to the keen sharp decision of his former demeanour. He trusted Langford more as an acquaintance, more even as a friend than as a prisoner. Two or three times he spoke of the chances of his son being still alive, and referred vaguely to the story which Langford had told him, but then darted off suddenly to something else.

At length, however, he took up the papers on which the other had commented, and, without noticing the observations that he had written, said it was unjust, upon a case where there was nothing made out against him but suspicion, that he should be detained as a close prisoner. "If, therefore," he said, "you will give me your word not to attempt to make your escape, the doors shall be thrown open to you; this chamber and the next shall be your abode for the time, though they should have put you somewhere else, for this room is appropriated to me. Here," he continued, in a thoughtful and abstracted tone, "when I wish to think over all the crowded acts of a long, eventful, and constantly changing life, I come and sit, where no sound interrupts me but the twittering of the swallow as it skims past my windows. Here I can people the air with the things, and beings, and deeds of the past, without the empty crowd of the insignificant living breaking in upon my solitude, and sweeping away the thinner but more thrilling creations called up by memory. I know not how it is, young gentleman, that there is scarcely any one but you whom I could have borne patiently to see in this chamber; but your countenance seems connected with those days to which this room is dedicated. There is a resemblance, a strong and touching resemblance to several persons long dead; and that likeness calls up again to my mind many a vision of my youthful days; days between which and the dark present lies a gulf of fiery passions, sorrows, and regrets. I know not wherefore they put you here, or who dared to do it,

but it is strange that, being here, you seem to my eyes the only fit tenant of this chamber except myself. Here I sit and read the letters of dead friends; here I sit and ponder over the affections and the hatreds, the hopes, the fears, the wrath, the enjoyment, the sorrow, the remorse of the past; here often do I sit and gaze upon the pictures of those I loved in former times, of the dead, and the changed, and the alienated; of persons who, when those pictures were painted, never thought that there could come a change upon them or upon me, either in the bodily or the mental frame; never dreamed of the mattock, and the grave, and the coffin, and the slow curling worm that has long since revelled in their heart; no, nor of fierce and fiery contention, envy, jealousy, rivalry, hatred, the death of bright affection, and the burial of every warm and once living hope. Here am I, still wont to gaze upon their pictures, and I know not how it is, but it seems to me as if your face were among them."

"I fear me, my lord," replied Langford, "that those endowed with strong feelings and strong passions are most frequently like children with a box of jewels, squandering precious things without knowing their value, and gaining in exchange but gauds and bawbles, the paint and tinsel of which is soon brushed off, leaving us nothing but regret. There is no time of life, however, I believe, at which we may not recover some of the jewels which we have cast away, if we but seek for them rightly; and I know no means likely to be more successful than that which you take in tracing back your steps through the past."

"It is a painful contemplation," said Lord Danemore, "and I fear that, in the dim twilight of age, let me trace back my steps as closely as I will, I am not likely to find again many of the jewels that I scattered from me in the full daylight of youth."

"Perhaps, my lord," replied Langford, "you might if you were to take a light. However," he added, seeing a look of impatience coming upon the earl, "I am much obliged to you for your offer of a partial kind of freedom. I never loved to have a door locked between me and the rest of the world; and I willingly promise you to make no attempt to escape during the whole of this day, for, of course, my promise must have a limit. In the course of that day you will most likely be able

to procure farther information in regard to this sad affair; and I do trust and hope that it may be such as may relieve your bosom from the apprehensions which now oppress you."

"I must exact your promise for two days," said the earl, "for I have sent to tell those two foolish men who brought you here that I cannot deal with them to-day, and have bidden them, in consequence of what you have said, though with but little hope, to cause search of every kind to be made through the country round. There are one or two questions, also, which I would fain ask you, but I will not do it now; yet I know not why I should not—but no, not now! Have I your promise?"

"You have," replied Langford; and the earl, after pausing and hesitating a moment or two longer, left him by the chief entrance, leaving the doors open behind him. "There is but one thing I ask of you," added the earl, as he turned to depart; "should you leave these two rooms, lock the door of the one in which you now are till you return, for I do not suffer the feet of ordinary servants to profane it."

When Langford was alone, he paused for a moment or two to think again over his situation; and then, with a natural desire to use the freedom that had been given him, opened the door of the chamber in which he had been placed, and proceeded through the bedroom beyond to the head of the staircase. Remembering the earl's request to lock the door, he turned back to do so, and when he again approached the stairs the voice of some one singing below rose to his ear. The tone in which the singer poured forth his ditty was low, but, after listening for a moment, Langford recognised the voice of the poor half-witted man, John Graves, and a sudden hope of finding means of clearing himself by the aid of that very person struck him. He descended the stairs slowly, and, at the bottom of the first flight, found the wanderer sitting on the lower step, with his head hanging down in an attitude of dejection; and, laying his hand upon his shoulder, Langford caused him to start up suddenly and turn round.

"Ah, Master Harry!" cried the man, in one of his saner moods, "is that you? It is you I came to see. I heard they had taken you up, and locked you up here, and I came to see if I could help you, for you have always been kind and generous to me; and then, if I could

not help you, I could sing you a song, and that would do you good, you know; I always said you ought to have your rights, you know; but I must not say so here, or they will scold me as they did before."

"Come up hither with me, John," said Langford; "I believe that you can help me if you will; but how came you here! Do they suffer you knowingly to wander about the house in this manner?"

"Not as far as this," replied the man, laughing, "not as far as this. They would soon drive me down if they saw me above the grand stairs. But about the passages below they never mind me. Only I sometimes creep up and find my way about all the rooms, and, if I hear a step, hide behind a window-curtain. It is no later than last night that I and another—but I must not speak of that. Never you mind, Master Harry, you will have your rights still."

"Perhaps so, John," answered Langford, "though I do not think you well know what my rights are. However, now follow me up here." Thus saying, he led the way to the apartments which had been assigned to him, followed quickly by the madman, whose step was as noiseless and stealthy as if he had been going to murder the sleeping. When he saw Langford approach the door of the inner room, he cast an anxious and furtive glance towards the top of the stairs and listened, and, as soon as the lock was turned and the entrance free, he ran in and closed it after him, looking straight towards one of the small cupboards in the wall, saying, "There! there! Be quick for fear some one should come!"

Langford gazed on him with some surprise, and then replied, "You know more of these matters than I thought you did. However, you mistake. I want you merely to bear a letter and a message for me."

"But the papers! the papers!" exclaimed the other. "Are you not going to take the papers?"

"No!" exclaimed Langford. "Certainly not by stealth, John."

"Then it is you that are mad," replied his companion; "and they have mistaken me for you. I will go and make affidavit of it."

"I should not hold myself justified in taking them stealthily," replied Langford. "Perhaps, ere I leave this house, I may claim them boldly; and some time or

another I must make you tell me how you know so much of matters I thought secret; but time is wanting now, and we may be interrupted. I have some reason to think that, if you will, you can find out for me a person called Franklin Gray."

"Can I find him out?" said the madman. "Ay, that I can; in two hours I can be with him."

"Will you bear a message from me to him," demanded Langford, "without forgetting a word of it, and without telling a word to any one else?"

"That I will, joyfully," replied the other; "I never forget; I wish I could. It is that turns me mad; I remember too well; and I will tell nothing, though they should put me to the torture. I always tell truth if I tell anything; but I can hold my tongue."

"Well, then," said Langford, "tell Franklin Gray for me, that I am here kept a prisoner on a charge of shooting poor Lord Harold. If he be shot, I entertain but few doubts in regard to who it was that did it; and I ask Franklin Gray, in honour and in memory of our old companionship, to give me the means of clearing and delivering myself."

"Franklin Gray shot him not," replied the madman; "that I know full well. Franklin and I are friends; don't you know that, Master Harry? For a fox, he is the best of foxes! But I'll do as you tell me, however."

"I know he did not shoot him," answered Langford; "I am as sure of that as you are. Nevertheless, carry him my message. But hold," he said, seeing the man turning abruptly to depart, "I will write a few lines to good Sir Walter Herbert, which I shall be glad if you will give into his hands, or into the hands of his daughter."

The half-witted man signified his willingness to do anything that Langford told him; and, sitting down at the table, that gentleman wrote a few lines to Sir Walter Herbert, briefly explaining to him his situation, and begging him, in case of his being detained beyond the close of the subsequent day, to take measures to ensure that justice was done him. This epistle he had no means of sealing; and, merely folding it up in the form of a letter, he put it into the hands of his hairbrained, and suffered him to depart.

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE man who, as we have said, received in that part of the country the name of Silly John, stole quietly down the stairs, and, finding nobody to impede his proceedings, had no sooner entered the corridor below than he was seized with a determination of descending the great staircase, thinking, as he expressed it in his commune with himself, that it would make him feel like a lord for once in his life.

We all see and know that every step which we take in our onway path through existence, whether directed by reason or prompted by caprice, whether apparently of the most trifling nature or seemingly of the utmost consequence, not only affects ourselves and the course of our fate, but more or less influences the state, the fortunes, and the future of others, even to the most remote bounds of that vast space in which cause and effect are constantly weaving the wide-spread web of events. So philosophers teach us; and such was certainly the case in the present instance; for the whim which led Silly John down the grand staircase of Danemore Castle was by no means without its effect upon Henry Langford; and might, under many circumstances, have produced consequences of very great importance. The whole house was silent, for the servants of all classes and denominations were busy at their afternoon meal; and the half-witted man, after looking round to see that no one was near, put on an air of mock dignity, stuck the cock's feather more smartly in his hat, threw out one leg and then the other with a wide stride, and saying to himself in a low tone, "Now I'm a lord!" began to descend the staircase. At that moment his eye fell upon a sword, with its belt and sword-knot, hanging up in the corridor, and, in order to make his figure complete, he turned back and decorated his person therewith.

When he had got to the bottom of the stairs, however, he looked at the sword with a somewhat wistful eye, as if he would fain have retained it to ornament his person; but then, muttering to himself, "No, no, I must

not steal ! Remember the eighth commandment, John Graves !” he unslung the sword, and looked it all over. When he had done he burst into a laugh, exclaiming, “ It is Master Harry’s sword, the very sword with which he slit that fox’s neck when they attacked Mistress Alice. They have taken it away from him, but I’ll take it back again ;” and, so saying, he ran hastily up to the door of the chamber in which he had left Langford, and, after tapping loudly with his knuckles, laid the weapon down upon the threshold, and tripped rapidly away.

While Langford opened the door, and with some surprise took up his own sword, of which he had been deprived by the magistrates when he had been brought to the castle, Silly John made the best of his way down the stairs, out of the front gates, across the esplanade and into the park. The feat that he had performed seemed to have given him a sort of impetus which he could not resist ; and he ran on across the park as fast as his lameness would let him, scrambled over the park paling, and never stopped till he had arrived at that point of the road where it branched into two divisions. There, however, he paused, and entered into one of those consultations with himself which were not unfrequent with him, and which formed a peculiar feature in his madness.

He suddenly remembered that he had two commissions to perform, and that he had no directions as to which was to be first executed. On all such occasions of difficulty, Silly John argued with himself on both sides of the question with the nicety of a special pleader ; weighing every motive on either part ; starting difficulties and solving them ; seeing differences and shades of difference where none existed ; and, in fact, acting the part of Hudibras and Ralpho both in one.

On the present occasion he stood discussing the question of whether he should first deliver the letter to Sir Walter Herbert or the message to Franklin Gray for nearly an hour ; and was seen by many persons who passed, laying down to himself the reasons, pro and con, with the forefinger of his right hand tapping the forefinger of his left at every new argument on either side. As he found it utterly impossible to settle the matter by dint of reasoning, he fell at length upon an expedient which decided it as rationally as any other means he could have brought to bear upon it. Fixing himself firmly upon the heel of his uninjured foot, he extended

the other leg and arm, and whirled himself violently round as if on a pivot, determining to follow that road to which his face was turned when he stopped.

It happened that the direction in which he at length found his face was towards the Manor House, and he accordingly bent his steps thither with all speed. The quantity of time which he had lost in his consultation with himself, however, and that occupied in going, rendered it very late in the day before he arrived; so that, although the servant to whom he delivered the note asked him in a kindly tone to come in and take some beer, he looked wistfully at the sky, from which the sun had just gone down, and, shaking his head, walked away, turning his steps towards the moor. The distance, as we have before shown, was considerable; and as he went, the long twilight of a summer's evening grew dimmer and more dim, faded away entirely, and night succeeded. Still, however, the poor fellow toiled on up the hill, followed the road that led across the moor, and passed the very spot where Langford had seen the pistol fired on the preceding night.

As he went by the beeches, he thought he heard a rustling sound beneath them; and, though accustomed to go at all hours through the wildest and least frequented paths, either fatigue and want of food, or some other cause, had unnerved him, and the sound made him start. He ran on upon the road as fast as he could, and then turned to look behind him. There was no moon, the night was sultry and dark, and it was difficult to distinguish any object distinctly; but he saw, or believed he saw, two men come out from the beeches as if to follow him; and he again ran on with all speed, taking his way across the moor. After he had gone about half a mile, he cast himself flat down among some fern and heath, and lay there for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour; after which he arose again, and hurried on towards the dwelling of Franklin Gray. Twice he thought he heard steps behind him; and his heart rejoiced when he saw the gate in the wall that surrounded the court. The gate was locked, however; the whole house looked dark and untenanted; not a window in the tower, or in the large building by the side, showed the slightest ray of light; and as he stood and shook the gate, he distinctly heard quick steps coming on the very path he had pursued.



A degree of terror which he had seldom before felt now took possession of him; and he ran round the wall as fast as he could, seeking for some entrance at the back. The first gate that he met with resisted like the other; but a second, fifty or sixty yards farther on, opened at once, and he hurried on towards the part of the building before him. He still seemed to hear the steps behind him; and with fear that amounted almost to agony, he felt along the wall for a bell or some other means of making himself heard. As he did so, his hand came against a door, which gave way beneath his touch, and he had almost fallen headlong down some steps. He caught, however, by the lintel in time; and, glad of any entrance, went down slowly, feeling his way with his foot and hands till he reached a level pavement. The air was cooler than it had been above; and a small square aperture at a considerable distance before him, while it gave admission to the wind, also showed the sort of faint dim light which yet lingered in the sky. Towards it he took his way after having listened for a moment with a beating heart, to ascertain whether he was pursued, and having made himself sure that he was not.

For a few paces nothing interrupted his progress, but the next moment he stumbled over some object on the ground; and, as he attempted to raise himself, his hand came in contact with something that felt like cloth. He instantly drew it back; but, after pausing a moment and hesitating, he stretched it out slowly again, and it lighted upon the cold clammy features of a dead man's face. Starting back, he again fell over the object which had thrown him down before, and which he now found to be a coffin.

Although all these circumstances were in themselves horrible, they served, in some degree, to relieve the mind of poor John Graves, who now remembered the ruins of the old church, which stood near, and naturally concluded that he had got into the vaults. The confusion of his brain prevented him from remembering that the place had been long unused for its original and legitimate purposes, and he was not one of those who feel any horror at the mere presence of the dead. On the contrary, the sight of the clay after the spirit had departed seemed to offer to his madness a curious matter of speculation, and he was fond of visiting the chamber of death among all the cottages in the neighbourhood.

After he had a little recovered himself, then, he muttered, "It's a corpse! I wonder if it is a man or a woman;" and he put out his hand again towards the face, and ran it over the jaw and lips to feel for the beard.

"It must be a gentleman to be put in the vault," he continued; "his hand will tell that! Poor men's hands are hard; and the rich keep their palms soft. I wonder if it is gold makes men's palms soft! Yes, it is a gentleman," he continued, as he slid his hand down the arm to the cold palm of the dead man.

But at that moment a light began to stream through the door by which he had entered, and his terror was once more renewed. "If they catch me here," he muttered, "they will think I am come to steal coffin-plates;" and as the increasing light showed him some of the objects round, he perceived a broken part of the wall which separated that vault from the next, and which lay in ruin amid the remains of former generations; with many a coffin stripped of all its idle finery by the hand of time piled up against it, together with dust and rubbish, and the crumbling vestiges of mortality.

Behind the screen thus formed the half-witted man crept, and lay trembling with a vague dread of he did not well know what; while the light, which by this time had approached close to the door, remained stationary for a moment, and two or three voices were heard speaking in a low tone. The next moment three men descended into the vault, one of whom bore a flambeau in his hand; but, for the first two or three minutes after they entered, Silly John could only hear without seeing, as his terror prevented him from making the slightest movement.

"You may as well wipe away the blood from off his face before you put him into the box," said one, as he and his companions seemed to stand by the corpse and gaze upon it with curious and speculating eyes.

"That was a deadly shot," said the other. "Poor devil! he never spoke a word after."

"He well deserved it," said a third voice, "that's my opinion; and, when that's the case, the deadlier the shot the better. But let us make haste, Master Hardie; though I do not see why he should be buried with that smart belt on. Come, let us toss up for it. Here is a crown-piece. You toss, Hardie."

While this conversation had been going on, the poor

half-witted man had remained ensconced behind the coffins and broken wall, trembling in every limb. This tremour assuredly proceeded from fear, and not from cold; for the air, which had been sultry all day, had now grown oppressively hot; and the heavy clouds, which had been rolling up during the evening like a vast curtain between earth and the free breath of heaven, had by this time covered the whole sky; while a few large drops of rain, pattering among the ruins of the church, and the broken stones, and long grass without, formed no unmusical prelude to the storm that was about soon to descend.

Scarcely had Doveton spoken (for he it was who took the lead upon the present occasion) when a faint blue gleam suddenly lighted up the inside of the vault, proceeding from the small square window, and flashing round upon all the grim and sombre features of the place, coffins, and skulls, and bones, and broken and disjointed stones, and high piles of mouldy earth, consisting chiefly of the dust of the dead. It came like the clear and searching glance of eternal truth, making dark secrets bright, and bringing forth from their obscurity all the dim hidden things of earth. That gleam flashed upon the countenances of the three robbers as they stood around the corpse, unmoved, unshaken by the solemn aspect of death, by the awful picture of their own mortality. The sudden glance of the lightning, however, made them each start involuntarily. He who held the crown-piece in his hand let it drop. No thunder followed the first flash, but another far more bright and vivid succeeded, playing round the buckles and clasps of the very swordbelt that one of them was in the act of removing from the corpse. A crash, which could not have been louder had the fragments of a mountain been poured upon their heads, came instantly after, shaking the whole building as if it would have cast down the last stone of the ruin.

"By —," cried one of the robbers, uttering a horrid imprecation, "what a peal!"

"Ay, and what a flash!" said another; "but, come, take off the belt, for fear he gets up off the trestles and stops us!"

"Ay, if we let him," said Doveton; "but may I never speak again if I did not think I saw his lips move! There! there!" he continued, as another flash of light-

ning shone again upon the features of the dead man, reversing all the lights which the flambeau had cast upon it, and making the whole features, without any real change, assume an expression entirely different. "There! there! I told you so! Look, he is grinning at us."

"Pooh, nonsense!" cried another; "the man's dead! he'll never grin again. Yet, by my life, there is the blood running!" And so far he spoke truth; for the jerk which had been given to the body in order to detach the swordbelt had caused a stream of dark gore to well slowly down and drop upon the ground.

"Let the belt be! let the belt be!" cried Hardcastle. "Hold the torch to his face and see if he does move! No, no! he is still enough! but, after all, one does not like dragging him out in such a night as this, to bury him upon the cold moor. It would not matter if he were alive; but let us stay here till the storm is over, and you, Harvey, run and get us some drink. It's neither a nice night, nor a nice place, nor a nice business; so we may as well have something to cheer us."

"I have no objection to the flagon," said Doveton, as Harvey left them to obtain the peculiar sort of liquid cheerfulness to which men engaged in not the most legitimate callings generally have recourse; "I have no objection to the flagon, but you know we must have done the job before the morning, Hardie, and the grave is not dug yet."

"Oh, we'll soon dig the grave," replied Hardcastle, "the ground is soft upon the moor, and it need not be very deep. Do you think, Doveton, that when folks are dead they can see us? I have often thought that very likely they can see and hear just as well as ever, but can't move or speak."

"I hope not! I hope not!" cried his companion; and at that moment came another flash of lightning, gleaming round and round the vault, followed by the tremendous roar of the thunder, and the rushing and the pattering of the big rain.

The whole scene was so awful; the corpse, the robbers, the vault, the thunder-storm, their speculations upon the dead, the mixture of superstition and impious daring which they displayed, the revel that they were preparing to hold by the side of a murdered body, and the images of the flagon and the grave, formed altogether a whole so terrible and so extraordinary, that

the poor man who lay concealed and beheld the strange and dreadful proceeding could endure it no longer ; but, starting up in a fit of desperation, he darted forward, overthrowing the pile of coffins before him, and rushing with the countenance of a risen corpse towards the stone steps which led into the vault. Surprised and terrified, the two robbers started back, the flambeau fell and nearly extinguished itself upon the ground, the body of the dead man was overthrown at their feet ; and, rushing on without pause, John Graves had gained the stairs and effected his exit before they knew who or what it was that had so suddenly broken in upon their conference.

Running as if a whole legion of fiends had been behind him, heeding not the deluge of rain that was now falling from the sky, but staggering and putting his hand to his eyes when the bright gleam of the lightning flashed across his path, the half-witted man hurried back again with all speed towards the moor, nor ceased for a moment the rapid steps which carried him forward till he had reached the beeches by Upwater Mere. There sitting down and clasping his hands over his knees, he remained with his whole thoughts cast into a state of greater confusion than ever, watching the liquid fire as it glanced over the water, and talking to himself whenever the thunder would let him hear his own voice.

It seemed, however, as if the same ghastly objects were destined to pursue him through that night ; for scarcely had the storm in some degree abated, and while a faint gray streak was just beginning to shine through the clouds, marking where the dim moon lay veiled behind them, when he heard coming steps ; and, as his only resource, he clambered into one of the beech trees, and sat watching what took place below. The only objects that he could distinguish were the forms of three men carrying a burden between them. They laid it down under the trees, and for the space of about half an hour there was the busy sound of the pickaxe and the spade, the shovelfuls of earth cast forth, and the slow delving noise when the heavy foot pressed the edge into the ground. At the end of that time the burden was lifted up, deposited in the pit, and the earth piled in again. It was done with haste, for the gray dawn was beginning to appear ; and John Graves could

clearly distinguish the forms of Doveton, Hardcastle, and Harvey, as, each taking up a part of the tools they had employed, they hurried away to escape the clear eye of day.

When they were gone, the half-witted man came down from the tree, and stood gazing upon the spot where the fresh gray earth of the moor, mingling with the thin green grass under the beech trees, showed the place where they had concealed the body.

"And liest thou there, Harold?" he said, speaking aloud, though there was nobody to hear, as was very much his custom. "And liest thou there, poor boy, with nothing around thee but the cold damp earth, and the gray morning of a storm shining upon thy last bed? And did they nurse thee so tenderly for this? did thy father spend wealth, and care, and thought; did he wrong others, and endanger his chance of heaven, and squander hope, and fear, and passion, and cunning, all for this? that thou shouldst lie here, without his knowing where thou retest; that thou shouldst lie here, like the daisy which his proud horse's feet cut off as he gallops along, without his knowing that it is broken? Alack and a-well-a-day! Alack and a-well-a-day! Poor boy, though thou hadst something of thy father's fire and something of thy mother's weakness, thou wert good and generous, and tender and compassionate. I know not how it is, Harold, but I am more sorry for thee than for people that I have loved better, and I cannot bear to think that thou shouldst lie here on this gloomy moor. Nor shalt thou, if I should dig thee out with my own hands! But then they'll say I killed thee," he added, after a moment's thought, "as they have said already of one who would as soon have killed himself. So I'll go and tell thy father, my poor boy! but no, I forgot, I must first go back to that man, for I promised; and I always keep my promise. It could not be Gray that killed thee. No, no, I do not think that. He's not fond of blood. He spared my life, so why should he take thine? I do not half like to go to him, yet I must, because I promised."

Poor Silly John lingered for some time beside the grave after he had finished this soliloquy, and then turned his steps back again, with some degree of confidence gained from the open daylight, towards the abode of Franklin Gray. He still hesitated, however, and ap-

prehensions of some kind made him wander at a distance from the house for several hours before he could make up his mind to approach it. He even went to a small alehouse, and strengthened his resolution with beer and bread and cheese; but that which, perhaps, afforded him more courage than anything, was the act of paying for his morning's meal with part of the money which Franklin Gray himself had given him.

As we have before seen, the conclusions at which the poor man arrived were very often just, and his madness consisted rather in a kind of wandering, an occasional want of the power of seizing and holding anything firmly, than in folly. In the present instance, then, he inferred, from the sight of the money given him by Franklin Gray, that a person who had treated him so kindly would not ill-use him or suffer him to be ill-used; and, accordingly, he gained courage from the contemplation, and set out for the tower. Although he had been twice there before since Franklin Gray had been the tenant thereof, yet, on both those occasions, his visits had been after dark; but, as he approached at present the scenes of all the horrors of the preceding night, he could scarcely believe his eyes, so different was the whole when displayed in the broad sunshine from that which it appeared under the shadow. In this instance, however, the face that it wore in the open day was the deceptive one, as is but too common through the world, and in life, and in the human heart. The tower, and the large building by its side, and the court within its walls, were converted into a farmhouse, with its barns, and its yard full of straw, and ploughshares, and farming implements, while carts stood around bearing the name of "Franklin Gray, farmer;" though the name of the place which followed was that of a distant part of the country, where probably he had exercised the same kind of farming which he now carried on. There were two or three stout men in farming habiliments about the yard too, whose faces were not unfamiliar to the eye of John Graves, and an honest watchdog stood chained near the stable door, as if the good farmer was in fear of nightly depredators. A flaxen-headed ploughboy whistled gayly in the court; and, at the moment that Silly John approached, a very lovely creature, habited in plain white garments, and carrying a beautiful child of little more than a year old in her

arms, was crossing on tiptoe the dirty yard, wet and muddy with the storm of the preceding night.

"A dainty farmer's dame, indeed!" said the half-witted man to himself; "but I'll speak to her rather than to any of the foxes. Women are always kindest."

His singular appearance had already attracted the attention of the person who was the subject of his contemplation, and she seemed at once to comprehend his character and the nature of the affliction under which he laboured.

"He is one of the happy," she said, speaking low, and to herself. "What would you, poor man?" she added, with her sweet-toned voice and foreign accent; "do you seek money or food?"

The half-witted man did not reply directly to her question, but, caught by her appearance and by her accent, his mind seemed to wander far away to other things, and he answered, "Ay, pretty lady, there have been others such as you. Many a one leaves her own land and marries a stranger, and is soon taught to repent, as women always will repent when they have trusted those they knew not, and forgotten their own friends, and cast their country behind them."

She whom he addressed answered first by a smile, and then said, "Not always! My husband will never make me repent; he never has made me repent, though long ago I did all you said, trusted a stranger, forgot my own friends, and cast my country behind me. But what would you, poor man? Can I help you?"

"Only tell Franklin Gray," replied the other, "that Henry Langford has been taken up on the charge of killing Lord Harold, and that they keep him a prisoner in Danemore Castle; so that now's the time to help him. I want nothing more, lady, but God's blessing upon your beautiful face;" and, so saying, he hurried away and left her, while a slight degree of colour came up into the cheek of Mona Gray, as much at the earnestness of the look which he gave her as at the allusion to her beauty.



## CHAPTER XIV.

THE world we live in is full of beautiful sights and sweet sounds; it is a treasure-house of loveliness and of melody. Whether the eye ranges over the face of nature at large, and marks all the varied, the magnificent, the sweet, the bright, the gentle, in wood, and mountain, and valley, and stream; or rests, wondering, and admiring, on the bright delicate fabric of a flower, the rich hues of the butterfly, or the lustrous plumage of the birds, beauty and brightness is everywhere. The air we breathe, too, is full of sweet sounds; whether in the singing of the birds, the murmuring music of the stream, or the hum of all the insect world upon the wing, everything is replete with harmony. But of all the lovely sights, and of all the touching sounds whereof nature is full, there is nothing so beautiful, there is nothing so sweet, as the sight and the words of natural affection.

Alice Herbert—for to her we must now turn—sat by the bedside of her father on the morning of that day, the eventful passing of which we have already commemorated in the last few chapters, as far as it affects the greater part of the characters connected with this tale. There was joy and brightness upon her countenance; and in the small and beautiful hand that rested on her lap she held open the packet of papers which had been left for her by Langford. She gazed in the countenance of her father with a look of eager and gratified affection, which gave to her lovely features a look of additional loveliness, and added the crowning beauty to the beauty of the whole. Her voice, too, sweet and melodious as it always was, seemed at least to her father's ears to have a more musical tone than ever, as she told him, with a heart thrilling with joy and satisfaction at having such news to tell, that she held in her hand the means of freeing him from the painful situation into which he had been plunged by the events of the night before; and that those means had been furnished to her by him whom she so deeply loved.

The feelings of Sir Walter himself were also very

sweet; they were sweet to receive such assistance from a daughter's hand; they were sweet from perceiving the happiness which to give that assistance afforded her; they were sweet from the very act of appreciating all her sensations; from the power of understanding and estimating the ideas and feelings of her whom he loved best on earth. They were sweet, but not wholly sweet. There was a sensation mingled with them, as there must almost always be with every enjoyment and delight of our mortal being, which tempered, if it did not sadden; which took some little part off the brightness of the joy. It may be that such slight deteriorations, that such partial alloys thrown into the gold of happiness, do, like the real alloys which render the precious metals more fitted for the hand of the workmen, render our pleasures more adapted to our state of being. At all events, the slight shade of something less than happiness which mingled with Sir Walter Herbert's feelings, was not sufficient to do more than give them a deeper interest. It was the thrill of a fine mind on receiving a benefit. Pride had nothing to do with it; and yet, when Alice Herbert showed him the various notes and bills of exchange which she held in her hand, a slight flush appeared upon his cheek, and a momentary feeling of embarrassment came over him. He would not, however, have let Alice perceive for the world that he felt the least embarrassment; he struggled against it, and conquered it in a moment.

"This is indeed generous and noble of Langford," he said. "This is like what I always supposed him; this is like what I could desire and hope in him who is to possess my Alice. But I must rise, Alice, my beloved. I must rise and see him, and thank him myself. I long to tell him how I appreciate his good and noble character, and to show him that I do so by seeking his advice, assistance, and counsel in a situation to which some carelessness and some want of wisdom, perhaps, have brought my affairs, though I feel assured and am confident, Alice, as you tell me he himself said last night, that matters are by no means so bad as the lawyer would unkindly have us believe. Go down, my love, and have the breakfast prepared; I will join you speedily."

Alice did as he bade her, leaving the papers with him; but, although her heart was very happy, she could have much wished that Langford himself had not been absent.

She knew that a thousand causes of the simplest and most natural kind might have taken him out at that early hour of the morning; but yet there was a feeling of apprehensiveness in her bosom which she did not attempt to account for, but which, in reality, proceeded from the agitation of the preceding evening; agitation which had taken from her heart that feeling of security in its own happiness which seldom, if ever, returns when once scared away. The first great misfortune is the breaking of a spell, the dissolving of that bright and beautiful illusion in which our youth is enshrined, the confidence of happiness; and there is no magic power in after-life sufficient to give us back the charm again. It may come in another world, but there it shall be a reality, and not a dream.

Alice Herbert, then, felt apprehensive she knew not of what; but in the silence of the old servants, and the solemn gloom that seemed to hang over them as they laid out the morning meal, there was something which increased her uneasiness. She asked herself why Wilson walked so slowly, why Halliday no longer bustled about as usual, forgetting, for a moment, his reverence for the ears of his master, in directing and scolding the other servants if they went wrong: and though she ultimately concluded that they had all heard some report of the difficulties into which her father had fallen, and that such a report had rendered their affectionate hearts sad, yet the conclusion did not altogether satisfy her; and she longed both for Langford's return and for her father's appearance at the breakfast-table.

Sir Walter did at length appear, but his first question was for Langford, to which the servant Halliday answered as he had been directed. The good knight seemed perfectly satisfied, and, sitting down to table, commenced his breakfast, talking to his daughter with an air that showed that the slight embarrassment under which he had first laboured was gone; that the despondency which had been produced by the imperfect insight into his affairs, given by the events of the preceding night, was passing away, and that hope and expectation were beginning to brighten up and smile upon him once more.

Ere breakfast was over, however, the servant Halliday entered the room, and, approaching the end of the table where his master sat, informed him that Gregory

Myrtle, the landlord of the Talbot, desired instantly to speak with him.

"What does he want, Halliday?" demanded the knight; "will not the good man's business wait?"

"I believe not, your worship," replied Halliday; "he says it is a matter of much importance."

"Well, then, send him in," said Sir Walter; "he is a good man and a merry one, and I will discuss the matter with him while I finish my breakfast."

Halliday looked at Alice, but he did not venture to say anything, and, retiring from the room, he soon after reappeared, ushering in the portly form of Gregory Myrtle.

The worthy host of the Talbot, however, for once in his life, had lost that radiant jocundity of expression which his countenance usually bore; and the question of Sir Walter was, "Why, how now, Master Gregory Myrtle, what is the matter with thee, mine host? Thou lookest as solemn and as much surprised as if thou hadst seen a ghost on thy way hither. I hope nothing has gone wrong with thee, good Gregory?"

"I have seen a sight, your worship," replied the landlord, laying his hand upon the white apron which covered his stomach; "I have seen a sight which I never thought to see, and which has made me as sad as anything can make Gregory Myrtle. I have seen Master Harry Langford taken away from mine house by two magistrates on a charge of murder!"

Sir Walter gazed on him for a single instant with astonishment, but then immediately turned towards his daughter, forgetting all his own feelings in hers. Alice, as pale as death, had sunk back in her chair, and was covering her eyes with her hands, while she seemed to gasp for breath under the agitation of the moment. Sir Walter started up and approached her tenderly, while Halliday ran from the other side of the room with water. She put it away with her hand, however, saying, "I shall be better in a moment! It was but the shock! Go on, Master Myrtle!"

Sir Walter gazed tenderly on his child, but the colour soon came into Alice's cheek, and she begged her father not to attend to her, but to go on with the sad business which had been so suddenly brought before him. Sir Walter again sat down to the table, and, as his mind turned from his daughter to the charge against one

whom she loved and whom he esteemed, surprise and indignation superseded all other feelings, and the blood mounted up into his cheek, while he demanded, "Of whose murder, pray, have they had the folly to accuse him?"

"Folly, indeed, your worship," replied Gregory Myrtle; "but they accuse him of having murdered Lord Harold last night upon the moor."

The blood again rushed rapidly through every vein back to Alice Herbert's heart, and her fair hand clasped almost convulsively the arm of the chair in which she sat. Her father's heart had instantly directed his eye towards her, and, rising from his seat, he went gently up to her, and took her by the hand, saying, "Let me help you to your room, dear child. I must make inquiries into this matter; but it is not a subject for your ears, my Alice."

"Yes, indeed," she replied, making an effort for calmness. "I have now heard the worst, my dear father, and shall be anxious to know all the rest. If I were away, I should be still more uneasy than I am here; pray go on."

"The charge is perfectly absurd!" replied Sir Walter, returning to his chair. "No one that knows Langford can for a moment suspect him of committing any crime. I will investigate the affair to the bottom, and, of course, take care that he is not subject to the annoyance of confinement any longer, my Alice. But go on, Master Myrtle! What more?"

Alice listened eagerly to all the details which Gregory Myrtle now gave, for her mind was not at all at ease in regard to the real state of the case. Not that she ever suspected Langford of having murdered the unhappy Lord Harold; of course such an idea never entered her mind; but she remembered that Langford had been absent the greater part of the preceding evening, and even a portion of the night. She knew that he had left her to see Lord Harold, whose feelings she doubted not were irritated and excited by what he had seen take place between her and his rival; and she did fear that Langford, notwithstanding the promise he had given her, might have been driven or tempted to draw his sword under some strong provocation. She knew that he had great powers of commanding himself; and she believed that, even had such an occurrence taken

place, he would have been perfectly capable of conversing with her over her father's affairs as he had done. At the same time she recollected that—although absorbed by the situation of her father, and occupied by her own feelings and sensations—she had remarked that Langford was pale, thoughtful, and seemingly agitated by emotions different from those which might be naturally called forth by the subjects on which they spoke.

On the other hand, he had assured her that no encounter had taken place between him and Lord Harold, and she did not think that, even to spare her feelings, Langford would say anything that was not true; but yet she thought that their meeting might have taken place even after Langford had left her. She accounted for his previous absence by supposing that he had gone to seek some friend to act as his second upon the occasion, and, in short, imagination found many a way of justifying the apprehensions that love was prompt to force. Under any ordinary circumstances, though she might bitterly have regretted that one whom she loved had stained his hand with the blood of a fellow-creature, yet she would have entertained no apprehensions for his safety in a mere affair of honour. But Alice had known from her infancy the Earl of Danemore, and had formed, almost without knowing it herself, an estimate of his character, which was but too near the reality. There was in it a remorselessness, a vehemence, a determination, an unscrupulous pursuit of his own purposes, which had been apparent to her, even as a child. She knew well, she felt perfectly convinced that he would halt at no step, that he would hesitate at no means to be avenged upon any one who had lifted a hand against his son; and she was well aware, too, that Lord Danemore united to his unscrupulous determination of character talents and skill, which gave but too often the means of accomplishing his purpose, however unjust.

Such knowledge and such feelings added deep apprehensions in regard to Langford's safety to the pain she would at any time have felt at the idea of one she loved taking the life of another human being; and the whole was mingled with sincere grief to think that one who had been her playmate in childhood, and who had loved her truly in more mature years; one whom she esteemed and felt for deeply, though she could not return his love,

had been cut off in the spring of life, before many blossoming virtues had yet borne fruit.

She listened eagerly, therefore, and anxiously to the words of the good landlord of the Talbot, while he detailed all those facts connected with the arrest of Langford which we have already dwelt upon. Her father, indeed, felt and showed much more indignation and surprise that the charge should be brought at all, than apprehension lest it should prove just; and when from some part of the conduct of the magistrates, as detailed by the worthy landlord, it appeared that they accused Langford of having slain Lord Harold in an unfair and secret manner, Alice shared in the indignant feelings of her father, and raised high her head at the very thought of her noble, her generous, her gallant lover being suspected of an unworthy act for a moment.

By the showing of Gregory Myrtle, it very speedily appeared to Sir Walter and his daughter that the magistrates had not dealt quite impartially in taking or seeking for evidence; and that they had shown a strong inclination to find out that Langford was really guilty. From what Sir Walter knew of the character of one, if not of both of those worthy gentlemen, he easily conceived it to be possible that they should be somewhat desirous of recommending themselves to Lord Danemore by an overstrained and excessive zeal in discovering the murderer of his son. But when he heard that the body of Lord Harold had not even been found, his indignation grew still greater, and he sent back Gregory Myrtle to the village, with directions to collect together every one who could give any information on the subject, promising, as soon as his horses could be saddled, to come over to the Talbot and investigate the matter to the bottom.

"As soon as this is done, Alice," he said, "I will ride over to the castle, notwithstanding the painful event that has occurred, discharge this long-standing debt to my good Lord Danemore, who has thought fit to make so unhandsome a use of it; and I will then insist upon even justice being shown towards our noble friend Langford, who, I doubt not, can prove his innocence in five minutes."

The worthy knight hastened all his proceedings; for when the cause of a friend was in his hands, none of that easy and somewhat apathetic indifference displayed

itself with which he was but too apt to regard his own affairs. His riding-boots were drawn on with speed, and he twice asked for his horses before the grooms could have had time to saddle them; nor had he for many years before been known to ride so fast as he did in going from the gates of his own park to the door of the Talbot. Almost the whole population of the little town was gathered about the inn, enjoying the satisfaction of a legitimate subject of marvel and gossip; and the glad and reverential smiles, the bows of unfeigned respect, and the homely but affectionate greeting with which they received the good knight as he rode up, showed pleasingly how much beloved the virtues and good qualities of all its members had rendered the family of the Manor.

Sir Walter, however, was detained at Moorhurst much longer than he expected, for everybody was anxious to give testimony before him, and many more crowded forward than could afford any satisfactory information, or throw the slightest light upon the case; and yet, as each and all of them had something to say in favour of Langford, Sir Walter could not find it in his heart to refuse to listen to any. The clerk of the parish was called upon to take down their depositions; and certainly, if having established a good character in a country town could have bested any man in a similar case, it might have done so with Langford in the present instance.

Sir Walter Herbert, however, did not lose sight of the great object, though he suffered himself to be deluged by much irrelevant matter, and he soon found that the only legitimate cause for supposing Langford at all connected with the death or disappearance of Lord Harold was the fact of the half-witted man, John Graves, having run down during the preceding evening and besought several persons to come up and prevent Langford and the young nobleman from killing each other. As he was known to adhere invariably to the truth, two or three of the townspeople had gone up with him into the park in order to keep the peace; but, on finding all quiet, and nobody there, had returned without further search.

Sir Walter discovered also that the two magistrates who had preceded him in the investigation had not even demanded to see John Graves himself, though his testi-



mony, taken second-hand, was that, in fact, on which the whole case rested. This he determined immediately to remedy; but the half-witted man was by that time nowhere to be found; and though Sir Walter waited for many hours while persons were despatched to seek for him in all directions, the good knight was at length obliged to give the matter up for the day, and return to the Manor House.

During his absence Alice was left for several hours with no companion but her own painful thoughts. She felt, as she might well feel, quite sure that Langford was innocent of any base, or cowardly, or treacherous action; she felt sure of his honour, his integrity, his uprightness. But that certainty, that confidence, though it gave her support, could not deliver her from apprehension. All her thoughts were gloomy. The bright joy which Langford's acknowledgment of his love on the preceding evening had afforded her, had been like one of those sweet, warm, summer-like days in the unconfirmed infancy of the year, which are succeeded immediately by storms and tempests. Her mind had rested for a moment in a vision of perfect happiness; but now, whichever way she turned her waking eyes, there was something painful in the prospect. Although she was very willing to believe that her father's pecuniary affairs were not in near so bad a state as Lord Danemore's lawyer had made them appear, yet there could be no doubt that they were greatly embarrassed, and that his income and resources were so much smaller than the rest of his ancestors, that it would be a duty to curtail his expenses, to diminish his establishment, and, in an age when luxury and splendour were daily increasing, to forego many of the conveniences and comforts which he had hitherto enjoyed, and all that dignified but unostentatious state which his family had kept up for many generations.

She knew, too, that to do so would be a bitter pang, wellnigh to the breaking of the heart that felt it; and although, for her own part, there was scarcely a pretty cottage in the neighbourhood in which she could not have made her home with cheerfulness and happiness, she looked forward with painful apprehension to the time when her father might have to leave the Manor House, and discharge the old servants who had served him so long, and be no more what he had been among the many who looked up to and revered him.

Such was one dark subject of contemplation: the death of Lord Harold was another. She thought of him as she had seen him the evening before, full of youth, and health, and energy; she thought of him as she had seen him in other days, full of joy and gayety, and that bright exuberant life which it is difficult to imagine can ever be extinguished when we gaze upon it in all its activity and brightness; and yet a single moment had put it out and ended it for ever.

Her mind then turned to the father of him who was gone; and she pictured him sitting in his lonely halls, childless, solitary, desolate, left without hope and without consolation to pass through the chill winter of his age till he reached the dark and cheerless resting-place of the tomb. She pitied him from her very heart; she could have wept for him; but then her thoughts turned to Langford, and she asked herself if it were possible that a man, who had just suffered so severely as Lord Danemore himself, could seek to bring misery and sorrow upon others. Abstractedly she would have thought such a thing impossible; but when she reflected upon the character of the man, she felt but too deeply convinced that his own misery would but make him seek to render others as miserable; that his despair would be bitter and turbulent, not calm and mild; and that to see the hearths of others desolate, the hearts of others broken, would, in all probability, be the consolation he would choose.

She was pondering sadly upon these gloomy subjects of contemplation, as well as upon that chief and still more absorbing one, the situation of him whom she so dearly loved, when the servant Halliday appeared to announce to her that Master Kinsight, Lord Danemore's attorney, was at the gate, and would not go away. He had told him, the servant said, that his worship was out, and that she herself was busy, and not to be disturbed; "but he still hangs there, Mistress Alice," continued the man, "and he is no way civil; so much so, indeed, that if I did not know his worship is averse to having anybody cudgelled, I would drub him for his pains."

"Do no such thing, Halliday," replied Alice, "but bring him in here; I will speak to him myself."

In a few minutes the lawyer entered the room, and threw himself down into a chair with very little cere-

mony. "So, Mistress Alice," he said, in a tone, the natural insolence of which was increased by the unconcealed hatred of Sir Walter's servants, "I find your father's out; gone out, I suppose, to avoid me, for he knew I was coming about this time for his answer and yours as to what we were speaking of last night."

"My father has gone out, Master Kinsight," replied Alice, calmly, "upon business of importance; but I can give you the answer that you require as well as if he were present. He is going over to Danemore Castle as soon as possible, to pay the money and interest which you came to claim, having found the means of doing so without any further delay."

"Ay, indeed, madam!" exclaimed the lawyer, with evident surprise, "indeed! Pray how?"

"That, I should conceive, sir," replied Alice, in the same tone in which she had before spoken, "that, I should conceive, is no business of yours."

"Your pardon, madam, your pardon," cried the lawyer, "it is business of mine. Your father must have borrowed the money; and, to have borrowed the money, he must have given security, and we hold mortgages over his whole property to its full value, and therefore—"

As he paused and hesitated, Alice replied, "I do not yet see, sir, how that would make it any business of yours. However, to satisfy you, the money was lent by my father's friend, Captain Langford, without any security whatever."

"Do you mean to say that the money was lent," he exclaimed, rudely, "actually lent, paid down? Come, come, I shall not go out of the house till I hear more of this matter, for I do not want to be trifled with, and go and tell my lord that the money is ready when it is not."

"Sir," said Alice Herbert, raising her head with a look of indignation, "you are insolent. The money is, as I have told you, now in the house, ready to be paid to your master—as I suppose I must call Lord Danemore—whenever my father is at leisure to do so. I expect him ere long, and, if you choose to remain till he returns, you may wait in the servants' hall. At present I myself am busy, and wish to be alone."

The lawyer looked somewhat disconcerted; but he paused thoughtfully for a moment, biting his lip, twirling his hat, and laying his finger on his brow, as if un-

certain what to do. At length he exclaimed, "No, no, I'll not wait; I'll go over to the earl directly, and take instructions."

So saying, he bade Alice a short and saucy adieu, and left her presence and the house, not finding a servant who would even show him the attention of holding his horse while he mounted.

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## CHAPTER XV.

LIGHT and shade, the chief sources of all physical beauty, may, and indeed must, have their effect in the world of the mind; but though the eye may rest well pleased upon deep shadows when relieved by bright lights on the face of nature, the human heart, in the picture of its own fate, unwillingly bears the darker portion, more especially when it is contrasted closely with the brighter. I fear that, like that famed English queen who has obtained for herself so much good and so much evil fame, we would always rather see the portrait painted without shade.

For several weeks Henry Langford had enjoyed a degree of happiness which he had never before known. From the night in which he was wounded in defence of Alice Herbert till the evening preceding the day on which we last left him, had been a period full of sweet hopes and new sensations, ending with the crowning joy of all, the knowledge of loving and being beloved. That period of bright light, however, had now been suddenly contrasted with as deep a shadow as had ever fallen on any part of his existence; and yet in the course of that existence he had known some sorrows and some cares. None, however, had touched him so deeply as this; for now he was imprisoned, not in consequence of having fallen into the power of a foreign enemy, taken in battle, and esteemed even while restrained, but accused of a base and cowardly crime, separated from those he loved best, placed in a situation from which it might be difficult for him to extricate himself, and feeling more deeply and painfully for the unhappy youth of whose murder he was accused than any one knew.

Sitting in solitude and in silence, the remainder of Henry Langford's day, after the half-witted man had left him, passed over in gloom and anxious thought. It was not that he yielded to despondency; it was not that he suffered hope to extinguish her torch, or even to shade its light for a moment. Knowing himself innocent of the crime with which he was charged; knowing that he possessed the love of Alice Herbert, and feeling sure that that love would never alter, there was always a balm for grief and anxiety. But still, even when he thought of Alice Herbert herself; when he remembered the situation of her father, and knew that any false steps might plunge the worthy knight into irretrievable ruin, he could not be without anxiety on that score either; and, in fact, whichever way he turned his eyes, there were clouds upon the horizon which threatened to gather into a storm.

The treatment which he received from the Earl of Danemore, indeed, was in all respects consolatory. That nobleman, it was clear, hardly entertained any suspicion of his having had a share in the murder of his son. Several times in the course of the evening servants were sent to ascertain if he wanted anything. The ordinary meals of the day were regularly set before him, and, when night fell, lights were brought, and various kinds of fine wine were left in the room, sufficient to satisfy him to the full if by chance he had addicted himself to the evil habit of deep drinking but too common in those days.

Some short time after the lights had been brought he heard a step approaching his room by the smaller staircase, and the earl again appeared. The expression of his countenance was agitated and anxious; but he apologized courteously for intruding, and then added, "I thought you might be pleased to learn that the whole of Upwater Mere has been dragged with the utmost care, without anything having been found to confirm my apprehensions in regard to its having been made the receptacle of my poor son's body. It is very foolish, under such circumstances and with such proofs of his death that we have, to give way to hope, but yet I cannot help yielding a little to your reasoning of this morning."

"I hope and trust, my lord," replied Langford, "that reasoning may not prove fallacious. Far be it from me

to wish to instil false hopes, but I would certainly, were I you, not give myself up to despair till the truth of the calamity is better ascertained."

"I know," replied the earl, "that coincidences very often happen, giving much unnecessary alarm. Indeed, the story which you told this morning is an extraordinary proof of the fact. I remember having heard it before," he added, in a careless tone, "though I forget where it was. Pray where did the incident happen?"

Langford mused for a single moment, and then looked up with something of a meaning smile. "It occurred, my lord," he replied, "in the Gulf of Florida, many years ago. I therefore do not know it from my own personal knowledge; but I have heard it from one who was present, and who told me the whole particulars of that and many another adventure in those seas."

It was now Lord Danemore's turn to muse, and he did so with a cloudy brow, gnawing his nether lip as if struggling with some powerful emotions. "Pray, do you know the name of the captain of the ship?" he asked at length, affecting the same careless tone with which he had before spoken.

"Yes, my lord," replied Langford, "I know his name and his whole history from that time to the present hour."

Lord Danemore turned very pale, and then mused for several minutes in silence. Nor was it unworthy of remark that he did not demand the name of the captain of the vessel, though the moment before he had seemed so much interested in the subject. He remained gloomy and silent, however, as we have said, knitting his brow thoughtfully, and his first words were, though in so low a tone that Langford did not hear them, "People may know too much."

Perceiving his lips move, and seeing that he was evidently much affected by what had passed, Langford, who had spoken with some degree of emphasis, added, with apparent indifference, "Yes, oh yes; I know his whole history well. He was an English gentleman of a brave, daring, and enterprising disposition, who, having been driven from his own country, and deprived for the time of his own possessions, pursued a wild and fitful course of life, now serving with gallant distinction in the armies of foreign countries, now becoming a rover on the high seas, and acquiring for himself a fearful and

redoubtable fame, till the restoration of the king suddenly recalled him to fortunes and honours in his own land."

Lord Danemore made no direct reply; but, putting his hand to his head, he said, "It is very hot; I have seldom known a more oppressive night."

As he spoke the storm, which had long been coming up, burst forth with a bright flash, which blazed with a blue and ghastly light round the dark wainscoted chamber in which they sat, lighting up every cornice and ornament in the carved oak, and seeming absolutely to play amid the papers on the table. At that very instant both Lord Danemore and Langford raised their eyes each to the countenance of his companion, and gazed upon each other with a firm and questioning glance.

"That was a bright flash," said the earl, with a lip that curled slightly as he spoke; "I do not know that I ever saw a brighter, except in the Gulf of Florida."

He added nothing more, nor waited for any reply, but rose as he spoke, and abruptly left the room. He trod the stairs down to his own private apartments with a heavy but irregular step, and paused at the bottom for several moments ere he opened the door which gave entrance to his own dressing-room, thinking with a gloomy brow and eyes bent steadfast, sightless, upon the ground. At length he entered and cast himself into a chair, clasping his strong bony hands firmly over each other; and oh! what a wild chaos of mingled feelings, and strong passions, and memories, and regrets, and dreads, and expectations, did his bosom at that moment contain. He was one of those men in whom time, if it have decayed some of the softer passions, has left the more fierce and fiery ones as strong and wild as ever; and it is certain that, where they dwell on in the withering frame of age, they tear it more eagerly, they rage with more unrestrained power.

All those passions were now called up in his bosom; and the struggle between them was the more tremendous, inasmuch as they were in many points arrayed nearly equally against each other. Henry Langford had in a few words laid before him the picture of his life, and had shown a deep and intimate knowledge of that darker part of his history which he had believed to be buried in profound oblivion. For more than twenty years he had heard no allusion to those days of wild and

roving adventure when, driven forth, as he fancied, for ever from his native land, stripped of his rank and his possessions, he had given way to the impulses of a rash, daring, and fierce spirit, had piled upon his own head many a heavy remorse, and seared his own heart with many a deed of evil. He had believed that all the companions of those days were either gone or scattered far from the high and lordly path in which he now trod; he had imagined that he had removed every trace of that bond of fate which united the proud, cold, wealthy Earl of Danemore, the domineering spirit of the country round, to the wild rover of the western seas, whose deeds of daring and of blood were still remembered with awe and fear in a land fertile of strong passions and great crimes.

There were many who remembered him in exile, indeed, but in that part of his exile when his daring courage and great powers had been employed in noble warfare and in an honourable cause; but he thought that the very fact of being so remembered would be an additional safeguard against all suspicion in regard to another period. There was, indeed, a lapse of several years in which his history was unknown to all such companions of his brighter days; and he had more than once been asked where he was when some great event had happened on which the conversation at the moment turned. But Lord Danemore was not a man to be interrogated closely by any one; and, as we have said, he firmly believed that all those who could have answered such questions by pointing to the dark and evil events which had been crowded into a few short years of his life, were far removed, plunged beneath the rolling waves of the ocean, buried upon the sandy beach of distant lands, or with their bones whitening—a public spectacle—in the sun.

Now, however, suddenly, after a long and sunshiny lapse of peaceful years, the memories of former acts were recalled when he least expected them; recalled by one who seemed to have a perfect knowledge of every fact he could have desired to hide; and the dark train of images conjured up from the past; the regret, the remorse, the shame, which he had banished long and carefully, were now linked hand in hand with apprehensions for the future, with the fear of exposure, if not the dread of punishment. His mind, however,



was in no unfit state for receiving gloomy impressions, his heart was already excited for the entertainment of fierce and angry passions. Through the whole of that day, from a very early hour in the morning, he had been torn with grief and anger, now mourning over the loss of his son with the deep anguish of wounded affection, now vowing vengeance against that son's murderer, while his heart felt scorched and seared by the burning thirst for revenge.

Disappointment, too, deep and bitter disappointment had had its share ; the disappointment of a proud and ambitious heart. On the son now lost he had fixed all his hopes and all his aspirations ; in him had he trusted to see his life prolonged ; through him had he expected that future generations would carry on his name with increasing wealth and greatness. Now all was over ; the son on whom he had relied was gone ; he was childless, lonely, cut off from hope and expectations, to live dark, solitary, through the chill autumnal twilight of his age, and then to die, leaving all the vast possessions which he had obtained to a distant kinsman whom he hated and despised.

Such had been, in some degree, the state of his feelings, so shaken, so agitated, when he suddenly found that shame was likely to be added to the other burdens cast upon him, and that the vice and crimes of other years were rising up in judgment against him even at the latest hour. The drop thus cast in was sufficient to make the cup overflow. Never through life had he been accustomed to put any restraint upon the fierce passions of his heart, and now what was there that could act as any check upon them ? what was there to prevent him from seeking their gratification ? what was there to oppose in any degree the desire which instantly sprang up within his heart, of silencing for ever the voice which might tell the dark secrets of other years ?

Nevertheless there was a check, nevertheless there was something that opposed him in the fiery course he might otherwise have pursued ; ay, and opposed him strongly, though it was but a feeling connected with other years, though it was but one of those strange associations between the present and the past which often have a firmer hold upon us than more immediate interests or affections. There was something in Langford's face, there was something in his manner and whole ap-

pearance, there was something in the very tone of his voice, rich, and musical, and harmonious, which called up as forcibly to his mind a period of sweet, and early, and happy days, as the tale he had told brought over the glass of memory the dark and awful features of another epoch.

At the sound of that voice, at the glance of that eye, the forms of many bright, and dear, and beloved, many who had been known and esteemed in times of innocence and of happiness, rose up as clear before him as if some magic wand had waved over the dark past, and brought out of the dim masses of things irrecoverably gone the images of the dead clothed in all the semblance of life and reality. The associations thus raised up were all sweet; and, in regard to him who called them up, there was a strange feeling of tenderness, of affection, and of interest, which at the very first sight had made him feel confident that that man could never have been the murderer of his son; that he who seemed connected with the brightest portion of his early life could never be one to render the latter part of his existence all dark and desolate.

Then, again, when he remembered that the same man held in his possession the great terrible secret of his former deeds, all his feelings and his thoughts were changed, and sensations almost approaching to despair came over him; a stern, dark, eager resolution, akin to those fierce determinations and sensations which had filled up that portion of his being to which his thoughts were so suddenly directed.

He sat then and gazed upon the ground, with his hands clasped over each other, and twice he murmured to himself, "People may know too much." He pondered upon every word that had been spoken, and for nearly half an hour his thoughts wandered with a vague uncertain rambling over the various epochs of the gone, connecting them with the present, and then turning again and again towards the past, while anguish and pleasure were still strangely mingled in the retrospect. Still, however, when he remembered the words of Langford, and felt himself to a certain degree in his power, the same dark but ill-defined purpose returned of removing for ever from his path one who held so dangerous a tie upon him. He felt, indeed, a reluctance, a hesitation, a doubt, which he somewhat scorned himself

for feeling; and he nerved his mind more and more every moment to execute his determination calmly and deliberately. "I will never live in the fear of any mortal man," he thought. "Were he ten times as like, he should not bear my fate about with him! How, shall he be my only consideration? Surely I am not become either a child or a woman, to waver in such a case as this."

As he thus thought, he rose from his seat and strode up and down the room with his arms folded on his chest. Over the large and massy mantelpiece of many-coloured marbles hung a number of weapons of different kinds; pistols, and swords, and firelocks, and daggers, some of foreign and some of British manufacture. There appeared the long Toledo blade, the broad Turkish dagger, the Italian stiletto, the no-longer-used match-lock, and many another weapon, arranged in fanciful devices; and each time as the earl turned up and down the room he paused and gazed upon them, then bit his lips, and recommenced his course across the chamber. When this had proceeded for about a quarter of an hour, some one knocked at the door, and he started sharply as if caught in some evil act. The next moment, however, he called to the person without to come in, speaking in an angry tone; and a servant, who, from his dress and appearance, seemed to be his own particular valet, appeared, announcing that Mr. Kinsight the lawyer had just arrived on important business.

"I am glad of it," said the earl; "take him to the library; I will come directly." And, as soon as the servant was gone, he added, "This man may be of some use."

He then carefully locked the door, which led from his dressing-room to the room which had been assigned to Langford, and descended to the library to confer with an agent worthy of his purposes.

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### CHAPTER III.

THE prisoner in the mean time was not left in solitude; for, scarcely had Lord Darnmore left his chamber, bearing with him a world of dark thoughts and excited pas-

sions, when Langford was visited by the person who, more than any one in that house or neighbourhood, seemed to know his history and understand his situation. Mistress Bertha, as she was called, came ostensibly in her character of housekeeper to ask if there were anything to be done for the promotion of his comfort; saying that she had been so commanded in the morning by the earl. She lingered, however, after she had received his answer, though for some minutes she scarcely spoke; and when she did she merely uttered a comment on the storm that was raging without. Langford seemed to understand her character well, and he too kept silence, leaving her to say anything that she might desire to say, in her own manner and at her own time.

"It is an awful night," she said; "an awful night, indeed. It is such a night as the spirits of bad men should depart in. I never pass such a night without thinking there is a likeness between it and the dark stormy heart of the wicked. But it matters not," she added, after a long thoughtful pause. "I have linked myself to his fate, and I must not sever the bond. He is my master, and has been good to me, though he may have wronged others. I will remain by his side."

She paused again, and Langford merely replied, "It were too late now to think of it."

"I understand your meaning," she said, "and it is too late. You would say that in former times I ought to have adhered to the wronged and the oppressed, and so I would, but I was driven from them. It is needless now, however," she continued; "it is needless to say one word more on that score; let us talk of other things. Has he been with you again?"

"He has scarcely left me a moment," replied Langford; "and I fear with less friendly feeling towards me than when we met before. I showed him that I knew much of his former life; for, in truth, good Bertha, the blow must be struck now or never."

"It must, it must!" she replied, "but not too rapidly. Be cautious, be careful. After he left you this morning I was with him long, and his feelings were all such as you could have hoped for. What had passed between you I know not; but there was a softness, a tenderness had come over him: a light as from other days seemed to shine into his heart, and to flash upon affections and feelings long buried in darkness. He spoke to me of

things he has not spoken of for many a year; he used words and he named names that I never thought to hear him utter again. The sight of you seemed to form an eddy in the current of time which carried him back to a happier and brighter part of its course. Be careful, however. Be careful how you deal with him. If you act well and wisely, ere the drops are dried up which are now falling from the clouds, you may tell him all, you may ask him all. But I know him well; and one rash word, one hasty act, may undo your fortunes at the very moment they are wellnigh built up."

"I will be careful," replied Langford; "I will be careful, because I am bound by every tie to use all gentle means rather than harsh ones. But still it is hard completely to restrain one's self, and to seek with softness and concession that which is wrongly withheld, and which I have every right to demand with the loud voice of justice."

"To demand and not obtain," replied Bertha; "for there is no means by which you can gain your purpose except by gentleness."

Langford smiled. "Be not quite sure of that," he said. "I have at this moment my fate in my own power."

"Indeed!" she exclaimed; "indeed! how so?"

"It matters not," Langford replied; "be assured I have; but, as I have said, I am bound by every consideration to use gentle means. If I find that they will succeed, I will employ none other; but, should they fail, I will boldly and openly assert my own rights, and both claim and take that which is my own."

Bertha's eye, while he spoke, fixed upon one of those small doors in the wainscoting which we have more than once mentioned, and she shook her head with an incredulous smile. "Because," she said, answering his thoughts more than his words, "because I have placed you here, and because there is between you and what you desire but one small partition. That partition is of iron, which, had you a thousandfold the strength you possess, you could never break through."

"I know it," replied Langford, "I know it well; but yet I tell you that in those respects my fate is in my own power. However, I will use all gentle means, though no subtlety; but in the end I will do myself right."

"Be it as you say," she answered; "but of one thing beware. It seems that you have rekindled in his bosom a hope of his son Edward being still living. Avoid that: the boy is dead beyond all doubt; struck down, poor fellow! in his pride of life; broken off in his dearest dream of happiness and love. He would have lived but to deeper grief; he would have remained but for greater anguish. Give the father no hope! For your own sake, give him no hope that the boy is still alive!"

"But I entertained hope myself," replied Langford; "and it was not in my nature, Bertha, to see a father grieving for the death of his son, and not try to afford him what consolation I could."

She shook her head mournfully, adding, "He is dead. I feel that his fate is accomplished. He could not live. He had no right to live. The date is out. He is taken away. But I must stay with you no longer; yet, in leaving you, remember my words: use none but gentle means! Urge him alone by the kinder feelings of his nature; for if ever there was a man in whom there dwelt at once two strong spirits, powerful for good and powerful for evil, it is he."

"I will remember your advice," replied Langford, "and thank you for it. I will use gentle means; but, by one means or another, right shall be done."

She lingered for another moment or two, as if desirous of saying more, but then turned and left him; and, proceeding down the staircase into the hall, she encountered the lawyer just alighted from his horse.

The man of law bowed low and reverentially to one whom he knew to possess great influence over his patron; and, more for something to say than on any other account, added to the usual salutation of good-evening, "It is a terrible night, Mistress Bertha; a good soaked posset now were not amiss to warm one."

She looked upon him, however, with cold and motionless features, merely replying in an under voice, as she passed on, "The time will come, I rather think, when you will be glad of something to cool instead of to warm you."

The lawyer must have caught the meaning of what she said, as well as the servant who was conducting him; for a well-satisfied smile came upon the face of the latter, while the attorney shrugged his shoulders and said aloud, "She is a rare virago."

He was conducted by the servant into the library of the castle, where, against the wide and lofty walls and round the massive pillars that supported the roof, were ranged in due order a vast number of dusty volumes, containing the wisdom, and the learning, and the folly, and the dulness of many preceding ages. Lights were placed upon the table; and, after waiting for a few minutes, gazing upon the ponderous tomes around him, without, however, venturing to disturb any of them by taking them from their places of long repose, he was joined by the earl, on whose strong-marked countenance the keen and practised eye of the lawyer recognised at once the traces of strong emotion.

Deep and reverential was the bow with which the earl was greeted by the same man who had so lately treated Alice Herbert and her father with contempt and indignity. He remained standing, though the earl had seated himself, and even then did not sit down till he had been twice told to do so. The earl, at the same time, would gladly have had the lawyer abate so much of his respect as to commence the conversation himself; for the nobleman's mind was full of dark purposes and stormy passions, and he wished them to be led forth by degrees, lest the fierce crowd, in rushing out too hastily, should throw open the innermost secrets of his heart to a stranger. The lawyer, however, did not venture to do so, being rather overawed than otherwise by the state of agitation in which he beheld his noble client; and the earl, putting a restraint upon his words to prevent himself from hurrying forward to the subject of his thoughts at once, began the conversation by saying, "This is a stormy night, sir. What business, may I ask, is it that has brought you hither at such an hour and in this weather?"

The lawyer, though he had gained no small knowledge of the world by long dealings with every different class of men, and by seeing them under every different circumstance and affection, was, nevertheless, embarrassed in regard to his demeanour towards Lord Danemore, situated as he knew him to be at that moment. He had expected to find him, as he did find him, deeply agitated; but the agitation which he had imagined he should behold was bitter grief for the death of his son. Now there was something in the aspect of the peer which made him see at once that many other feelings

were mingled with his sorrow ; and as he did not know what those feelings were, and desired solely so to shape his whole conduct as to make it agreeable to his patron, he was excessively anxious to discover, by some means, what was going on in the earl's breast, in order to direct his course accordingly.

Finding, however, that he was not able to make such discoveries, he judged it the best plan to throw before the earl the subject farthest removed from the death of his son ; and to counterbalance grief by exciting anger. He replied, therefore, after a moment's thought, "Nothing but important business, my lord, would have induced me to intrude upon you at such a moment. Your lordship, however, will recollect that you gave me your commands to proceed in a certain manner in regard to the old knight at Moorhurst, in which, I am sorry to say, I have been frustrated by a most unexpected incident."

"Frustrated, sir!" exclaimed the earl, the whole of whose passions were in too excited a state not to take fire at every new obstacle cast in his way. "Frustrated! By all the powers of Heaven, I will not be frustrated! What! do you mean to tell me that there is any flaw in the bond, any error in the transaction, which will debar me of my right? If so, look to yourself, sir; for you drew up the whole. Or would you have me believe that he has money to discharge the debt? I tell you, sir, he is a beggar; he is ruined, undone, as you well know. What is the meaning of all this? Frustrated! shall he frustrate me?" and he ended with a scoff of angry derision.

"It is for the purpose of preventing it, my lord," replied the lawyer, meekly, "that I came hither to-night. I wished to lay the case before you, and take your lordship's commands."

"Well, sir, well," rejoined the earl, recovering from the first burst of passion, "tell me the facts that I may judge."

From not knowing the new matter which had been cast into the fiery furnace of the earl's bosom, the lawyer was more and more puzzled at his demeanour every moment. He saw that there was an under-current of feelings running more rapidly than the natural course of those excited by the matter on which they spoke. And, in order to fathom his mind and ascertain of what



feelings that under-current was composed, he resolved to throw in, even unnecessarily, the name of Lord Harold, and he answered, "The facts are these, my lord: after seeing you yesterday, and taking precise instructions from you as to the course I was to pursue, I went over to Moorhurst, where I found your lordship's lamented son."

As he spoke a dark cloud came over the countenance of the earl, but it was of a different kind and character from that which had hung upon his brow before; and the lawyer, at once perceiving that he had not found the right road, instantly turned to the straightforward path, finding that he must take his chance of going right or wrong in a country where there was no fingerpost to direct him. "I was in some apprehension," he continued, "lest his generosity might step in to interfere with your lordship's just views and purposes."

"Speak not of my son, sir," said the earl, sternly; "speak not of my son; for although, now that the first anguish is past, I have conquered the quivering of my wounded heart, and the flesh is still, yet I love not that any one should lay his finger on the spot, unless it be a surgeon to heal the injury. Go on with the matter in hand. What said Sir Walter Herbert?"

"Why he said, my lord, that he could not pay the money," replied the lawyer; "and he fell into a great state of agitation, and would not believe that his affairs were so bad till I showed him that they could hardly be worse; and then Mistress Alice was sent for, and, I must say, never were such airs as the young woman gave herself."

"The young lady, sir!" said the earl, sternly; "you forget yourself. The person whom I considered meet to be the bride of my son may well merit her proper name from a low person like yourself."

The attorney was not without the natural feelings of humanity, and he did not fail to experience all those sensations which, in other circumstances, induce one man to knock down another. But the effect of our feelings, when prevented from operating in their natural direction, is often, by their recoil, to drive us in a way directly contrary. Though the lawyer then would have given a great deal to have repelled the insulting language of Lord Danemore, yet he would not have given for that purpose the hundredth part of the advantage which he

derived from his patronage and employment; and this being the case, it always happened that the more rude and overbearing the peer showed himself to be in his demeanour towards the lawyer, the more servile and humble became the lawyer towards the peer.

In the present instance he begged his lordship's pardon a thousand times, but excused himself on the plea that the conduct of Mistress Alice, her expressions regarding his lordship himself, had been so bold and haughty, that his indignation got the better of his manners.

"However, my lord," he continued, "she agreed at once to give up the pittance that she possesses for the relief of her father; but still the plate, and the jewels, and all the rest would have to be sold to make up the sum required. I doubt if even that would do, and he would certainly be obliged to go out of the house, and be reduced nearly to a state of beggary."

There was a degree of satisfaction apparent in the countenance of the earl which made the lawyer stop to let it work, and he watched every shade of expression that passed over the face of Lord Danemore, as he gazed with a curling lip upon the ground. With a sudden start, however, the peer raised his eyes to the countenance of the lawyer, and beheld there, reading it in a moment as a familiar book, all that was passing in his agent's mind.

"You are right, sir," he said, going boldly and at once to the subject of the lawyer's thoughts; "I do hate that man; and, if you think that you have made a discovery, you deceive yourself, for there is nothing to conceal. Other men hate their neighbours as well as I, and I see not wherefore I should not have my own private enmities and gratify them like others. He is one of those good honest people whom the world delight to praise, and the vulgar love and honour. He sets himself up for modest simplicity, and yet affects a state and station which he has not the means to maintain. He is one of your positive lovers of right, too, yielding but formal respect to his superiors, but denying them all authority in matters of importance. In times long gone, when first I returned after the restoration, I met with more difficulty and opposition in establishing my just rights and influence over the tenantry and people in the neighbourhood from that mild, justice-fancying, learning-loving Sir Walter Herbert, than from all the other

petty squires and magistrates in the county. If it had not been for the love that my poor boy entertained for him and for his daughter, I would have swept him from my path long ago; but go on, go on with your tale. What obstacle has since arisen?"

"Why, last night, my lord," replied the lawyer, "I left all matters in as fair a train as well might be. The old man had become as pale as ashes, and the young lady, notwithstanding all her pride, had more than once wept bitterly. I gave them till this morning to make up their minds as to how they would act; but, when I went thither about two or three hours ago, I found the old knight from home, and my young mistress with her pride and haughtiness all in fresh bloom again. The end of the matter is, my lord, that it seems a friend has been found foolish enough to advance the money without any security whatsoever. A Captain Langford, whom I never before heard of."

"Who? who?" demanded the earl.

The lawyer repeated the name; and his noble companion, starting up, struck the table a blow with his clinched hand which made the lights dance and flicker as they stood. "This is too much," he said; "this is too much: I know now where I must aim."

The lawyer had risen at the same time as the peer; and Lord Danemore, striding across towards him, grasped him firmly by the arm, saying, in a low voice, "That very man, that very Langford, is now in this house, having been brought hither by those two foolish justices, Sir Thomas Waller and Sir Matthew Scrope, on charge of being the murderer of my son."

The lawyer, forgetting one half of the awful circumstances of the moment, rubbed his hands with a look of satisfaction. "That will just do, my lord; that will just do!" he exclaimed. "If we can get any proof whatsoever that the money is furnished by this Langford, we will, when it is tendered, which will doubtless be the case to-morrow, seize upon it as the property of a felon, and then proceed against Sir Walter as if he had never had it. Long ere this Langford comes to be tried, by one means or another we can lay the old man by the heels in jail, and then, what by one process or another, mount him up such an expense at law as will leave him scarcely a coat to his back."

The earl smiled, partly with satisfaction at the ready

means of gratification which had been found for him in one instance, and partly with contemptuous insight into the workings of the lawyer's mind, feeling that degree of pleasant scorn with which the more powerful but not less evil minds regard the minor operations of the tools they work with in the accomplishment of evil purposes. The lawyer remarked the expression, and fancied that it was well-pleased admiration of his skill and readiness; and again he rubbed his hands, and chuckled with conceit and pleasure.

The earl, however, waved his hand somewhat sternly. "Cease, cease," he said, "I can have no laughter here! This house is a house of mourning and of vengeance. We will have no laughter! Your idea is a good one, and you shall be rewarded if the execution answers to the conception. But there is more to be done; there are still greater things to be accomplished; things that are painful to me, but which yet I must do; things I shall remember and regret, but which yet I will not shrink from."

As he spoke there came over the strong stern features of the old man's face a dark and awful expression, which made even the lawyer shrink and draw back, accustomed as he was to see human passions in all their direst forms. It was the expression, the irrepressible expression of a powerful mind deliberately summoning all its energies to the commission of a crime known, appreciated, and abhorred. The evident effect produced upon the lawyer seemed in some degree to affect his patron, who, ere he spoke further, took two or three gloomy turns up and down the room, and then again drawing near him, said, "But this Langford; what is to be done with Langford? He remains to be dealt with."

The lawyer gazed in the earl's countenance, doubting in his own mind what he meant; and imagining that the very fact of having aided Sir Walter Herbert was so great a crime in the eyes of the earl as to call down his vengeance as remorselessly upon the one as upon the other. It was a pitch of vindictiveness at which even his mind was staggered, and he said with some embarrassment, "But, my lord, from what your lordship said just now of those two justices, I fancied you thought the gentleman not guilty."

The earl gazed upon him steadfastly for so long that

the lawyer shrunk beneath his eyes. He answered deliberately, "I do not think him guilty, but yet I would prove him so."

"But, my lord," stammered the lawyer, "my lord, if the man be innocent! I dare say he did not know he would offend your lordship by helping Sir Walter, otherwise—"

"Hush!" exclaimed the earl. "It is no such pitiful motive as that which moves me. I have other reasons for my actions, other causes for my determination. Whether the man murdered my son or not is of little import in this question. Harken to me, my good friend; he must be swept from my path. I have strong and sufficient causes for wishing him hence. He and I cannot live long in the same world together!"

"Good God! my lord," replied the lawyer, "this is very terrible. I really know not how to act or what to think."

"Think," said the peer, "that if by your means I succeed in this business; if by your zeal for myself and my family you convict this man of the murder of my son, wealth and distinction shall be yours for the rest of your life; but if you do not—"

"But, my lord," said the lawyer, presuming upon the situation in which they were placed so far as to interrupt the earl, "these are great and terrible things; and if I undertake to accomplish that which your lordship wishes, I must have my reward made sure to me. We do not do such things without reward nor with any uncertainty."

Lord Danemore now felt, by the bold tone assumed by his subservient tool, a part of the bitterness of wrong action; but he was prepared for that also, and he replied at once, "You are bold, sir, to speak to me in such a manner; but I understand your meaning, and I have a hold upon you yet. We are here alone with no one to witness our conversation; you, therefore, judge that I may promise and not perform. But that same exclusion of all witnesses is my security, if not yours; and I now tell you, that if you do not accomplish that which I command, I will withdraw from your hands all those sources of emolument you now enjoy from me; and I will keep this promise in the one case as surely as I will keep the other in the other case. Make me no re-



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## CHAPTER XVII.

THE storm of the preceding night had ceased, and left the earth all glittering with golden drops, when the sun rose up and poured the full tide of his glorious light upon that world where, during his absence, so many dark and fearful scenes had been enacted. About nine o'clock, and along a tortuous and unscientific road—which seemed to have been cut solely with a view of mingling the bright sunshine and the cool green shades amid the pleasant woods through which it wandered—rode along Alice Herbert and her father. Their thoughts were full of matter of deep moment: cares, fears, anxieties, were busy in their bosoms; but yet it were false to say that the sweet scenes through which their way was laid, the cheerful aspect of the summer world, the voice of the blackbird and the lark, the soft calm air of the bright morning, did not soften and sooth their feelings. It is not alone that in the breast of almost every one there goes on a sort of silent superstition, drawing auguries almost unknown to ourselves from every varying feature of the scenes through which we are led, finding the frowning look of boding fate upon the sky when the dark clouds roll over it, or the bright smile of hope when it spreads out clear and bright above us; but it is that there are mysterious links of harmony between all our feelings and the universal creations of our God; and that the fine electric chain, along which so many strange and thrilling vibrations run, is carried from the heart of man to the uttermost verge of heaven.

The brightness of the morning sunk into Alice's soul, and soothed the painful memories within her; the easy motion, too, of her light jennet, as he cantered untiringly forward through the fresh early air, had something in it inspiring and gladsome. He went along with her as if there were no such things as obstacles or barriers in all life's road, as if all things were smooth and easy as his own soft pace. Sir Walter, too, felt the same; he was peculiarly susceptible to the impressions of external nature, and readily yielded his whole heart to the bright influence of everything fine and beautiful throughout the

range of creation. Though in early life he had mingled with many scenes of active strife and endeavour, his heart was all unused and fresh, and retained all the capabilities of enjoyment which bless our early years. He too, therefore, felt his heart lighter, and the fountain of hope welling up anew within him from the glad-some aspect of the morning; and as he rode on with his daughter, followed by two or three servants on horseback, he conversed cheerfully and happily over coming events, and spoke of Langford being immediately set free, of his own affairs restored to order and abundance, and of the happiness of all parties being secured, as if he had held in his hands the keys of fate, and could open the storehouses of Fortune, to bring forth what pleasure he pleased for after years.

He spoke, too, without any animosity of the Earl of Danemore and of his proceedings towards him; and Alice, on her part, was enchanted to hear him do so, for she had feared, from the tone of her father's feelings on the day before, that, either in regard to his own affairs or to those of Henry Langford, some sharp collision would take place between him and the earl on the first occasion of their meeting. It was partly on that account that, when Sir Walter had announced his intention of going over in person to the castle, both to discharge the debt to Lord Danemore, to lay before him the evidence which he had procured concerning Langford, and to request him to set the latter at liberty, she had besought him, in terms which her father could not resist, to take her with him.

"The proceeding will seem strange," she said; "but I do not think Lord Danemore is a man that will think it so. He has shown me much kindness, and I should wish to see him and condole with him under his present grief, both because I do sincerely feel for him, and because I wish him to know that any grief or disappointment I may have occasioned his poor son was not mingled with any unkindness of feeling on my part, any lightness of conduct, or any wish to inflict a wound. He has no one near him to console him or to comfort him; we are the only people he has at all associated with, and I used to think that he was fond of my society, and would hear things from me which he would listen to from no one else."

His daughter's arguments were almost always good



to the mind of Sir Walter Herbert ; and even if he did understand that she was afraid he might become somewhat over vehement with the proud and passionate man he was about to see, his was one of those kindly natures, free from that irritable vanity which is jealous of all interference ; and he suffered his daughter to have her way, because he knew that her motive was good, and felt that he as well as another might fall into error.

Thus they rode on : and, as they went, Sir Walter himself found a thousand excuses for the conduct of the earl ; showed Alice how, in that nobleman's seeming want of liberality towards himself, fatherly pride, wounded by the rejection of his son, might have the greatest share ; and how, in the detention of Langford, the magistrates who had arrested him were most to blame, while it was natural that a father's heart, torn and wrung as his must be, should make him regard mere suspicion as direct proof, and suffer his eager desire for vengeance to blind his eyes to the real object.

Judging from such expressions, Alice now felt little doubt that her father's first interview with the earl would pass over tranquilly ; and having no longer the strong motive which had, at first, induced her to cast off a certain feeling of timid shyness which she experienced in regard to seeing Lord Danemore for the first time after all that had taken place between herself and his son, she proposed to remain for a time with Mistress Bertha, the housekeeper, and not to see the earl till after the business on which Sir Walter went was concluded.

"Perhaps it may be better, my love," replied Sir Walter, "although I never liked that woman, who is as stern and harsh a being, I think, as ever was created. Yet she was always fond of you, Alice : and, in regard to my conversation with the earl, put your mind at rest : I am too sorry for him at the present moment to let any degree of anger rest in my bosom, or to suffer anything that he can say, knowing as I do the violence of his nature, to make me forget for one moment that he is a father mourning for the unexpected loss of his only son."

Their plans being thus arranged, Sir Walter announced to the porter of Danemore Castle that his daughter would remain with Mistress Bertha, while he craved audience with the earl on important business.

There was something in the demeanour of Sir Walter Herbert which even the insolent servants of Lord Dane-

more could not resist : there was the mingling of courtesy and dignity, the conscious right to command, but that right, waived for kindness' sake, which is sure to win respect even from those the most unwilling to pay it. The worthy knight and his daughter then were shown, with some degree of ceremony, into one of the large, cold, stately saloons of the castle, while the servant proceeded to announce their coming to his master. He returned in a few minutes, saying that the earl would join Sir Walter there ere long, and that, in the mean time, he would conduct the young lady to Mistress Bertha's room.

She had not been long gone when Sir Walter was joined by the earl, who was followed into the room by the lawyer, hanging his head and bending his back, like a sulky dog trudging at its master's heels. Lord Danemore received Sir Walter with stately coldness, begged him to be seated, and, as if totally unconscious of anything that had passed before, requested to know what was the cause of his being honoured with Sir Walter Herbert's presence.

"I should not have intruded upon you, my lord, especially at such a moment," said Sir Walter, "but that I was desirous both of offering you any assistance and co-operation in my power in the very painful inquiries which must fall to your lot to make, of laying before you a considerable mass of information which I have already obtained, and, at the same time, of discharging an obligation which I only deeply regret that it has not been in my power to liquidate long ago."

"Thanking you for your offers of assistance, sir," said the earl, "we will, if you please, turn to the latter point you have mentioned first. Although I ordered my views upon the subject to be notified to you before the loss I have sustained, yet I shall not suffer that loss to interfere with the progress of a business which it must be as agreeable to Sir Walter Herbert as to myself to bring to a conclusion."

The earl spoke in a cold and cutting tone, which brought the warm blood into Sir Walter's cheek. He replied calmly, however, saying, "Of course, my lord, it is as agreeable to me as to you to conclude a business of this nature, which has produced, I am sorry to say, between us feelings which I hoped would never have existed."

"It seems to me, sir," said the earl, "that we are entering upon irrelevant matter. I can accuse myself of having done nothing that I was not justified in doing, nor do I perceive that any persons have a right to accuse me of being wanting in feelings of friendship when they were themselves the first to reject advances by which, considering all things, I believe they might think themselves both honoured and favoured."

"We might view that fact in a different light, my lord," replied Sir Walter, who was becoming somewhat irritated; "however, not to touch any further upon subjects of an unpleasant nature, I am here to tender you payment of the bond which you hold of mine, although, as you are well aware, my lord, the debt was in reality none of mine, but incurred through the villany of another."

"With that, sir, I have nothing to do," said the earl; "but what are these papers that you offer me?"

"They are, my lord," replied Sir Walter, "as you may see, bills of exchange from houses of undoubted respectability in the capital; of course it is hardly possible to carry in safety such a sum in gold. Should your lordship, however, as by your countenance I am led to suppose, object to receive the amount in this manner, I will, of course, cause the bills to be immediately turned into money."

"I am far from objecting to receive the amount in this manner," replied the earl; "indeed, it might be, in many respects, more convenient; but there is something peculiar here; more than one of these bills is endorsed with the name of Henry Langford."

"Such is the case, my lord," replied Sir Walter. "Of that gentleman I shall have to speak to you in a few moments; but it was your lordship's wish that we should adhere in the first instance to this business, and, such being the case, we will conclude it, if you please. Are you willing to receive those bills in payment? or shall I cause them to be turned into money, as may be done immediately?"

A dark and fiendlike smile of satisfaction had been gradually coming over the countenance of the earl, and there was a struggle in his mind between the natural quickness and impatience of his disposition, and the desire which he felt to protract the actual execution of his purpose, in order to enjoy every step he took therein. Im-

patience, however, at length predominated, and he replied, taking the whole packet of bills of exchange from the table,

"There will be no occasion, I am afraid, to cause these bills to be turned into money, for some time at least; although, Sir Walter Herbert, I cannot receive them as payment of your debt. They are, as I am informed—and the name upon the back of some of them bears out that information—they are the property of a person now under charge of felony; and I therefore find myself called upon, in my capacity of magistrate, to take possession of them till the accusation against him is proved or disproved."

Sir Walter, for a moment, sat before him thunder-struck, without making any reply, while the earl continued to fix upon him the full gaze of his stern dark eyes, enjoying the surprise and pain he had occasioned. The instant after, however, Sir Walter recovered himself, and, replying to the look of the earl with one as stern and resolute, he said, "I conclude that your lordship is jesting, though the moment for so doing is strangely chosen; but I cannot believe that the Earl of Danemore wishes to prove himself a villain more detestable than the needy sharper who fleeces a confiding dupe. Concluding that there was something in noble blood which implied honour and integrity; trusting that a long line of generous ancestors afforded some tie to honesty and upright conduct, if nothing more; believing the person who calls himself the Earl of Danemore not to be the bastard of a noble house, but one who had some cause to hold its honour high; thus thinking and believing, I placed in his hands those papers, which he is bound either to receive as payment of his debt, or to restore to me in the same manner as he received them."

The earl was too well satisfied to yield to anger, and he replied with the same cold and bitter calmness which he had displayed throughout, "You are right, sir, in all your conclusions except the last. Noble birth should be coupled with integrity; high ancestors are a tie to honour; the Earl of Danemore has every reason to believe himself the legitimate son of his father; but nevertheless, he may take a different view of his duty from Sir Walter Herbert, in a matter where Sir Walter Herbert is an interested party; too much so, indeed, to judge with his usual clearness. These papers, which it is now

my purpose to seal up and deliver into the hands of my worthy friend here present, Master Kinsight, are evidently the property of this same Henry Langford who stands accused of the murder of my son."

"My lord, my lord," interrupted Sir Walter, "if you have taken any pains to investigate this matter, you must be well aware that the case made out against that upright and honourable man, Captain Langford, is not even a case of suspicion, far less one which justifies his detention for a moment. It is not even proved that your son is dead; and I pray to God that it may not be so—"

"Prove that, sir, prove that," exclaimed the earl, "and none will be more glad than I shall be; but, even then, I very much fear these papers would remain to be dealt with according to law, as there can be no doubt whatever that this same Henry Langford, if not a principal, is an accessory to all those acts of pillage and robbery which have lately disgraced this neighbourhood. You are not aware, Sir Walter, of all the facts; you are not aware of all that has been discovered this very morning, Master Kinsight here having, with all his own shrewdness, obtained proof, almost incontestible, that this same Henry Langford is one of a band of plunderers who have established themselves in this county, and whose acts speak for themselves."

Again Sir Walter Herbert was struck dumb. "My lord," he said at length, after a considerable pause, "I am a magistrate of the county, and, consequently, may be permitted to demand the nature of the evidence against Captain Langford, especially as I have both taken a very active part in putting down the system of violence and outrage which has, as you observed, disgraced this neighbourhood, and have investigated the matter thoroughly since the attack upon my daughter, of which you most probably have heard, and from which she was delivered by the courage of Captain Langford alone. I, therefore, must beg to see the evidence against him, as I have with me the depositions of various witnesses, which clear him of all suspicion in regard to the disappearance of your son."

"I do not think myself called upon," replied the earl, "nor, indeed, do I think it would be right and just, to make any one acquainted with the discoveries we have already made, before the whole train of evidence is ma-

ture. There are two learned, wise, and most respectable magistrates, Sir Thomas Waller and Sir Matthew Scrope, who are even now engaged in collecting information on the subject, and it would be not only an insult to them, but an ineffectual means of frustrating the ends of justice, were any other person permitted to interfere, especially when that person is avowedly a supporter of the culprit."

"All this is very specious, my lord," replied Sir Walter; "but it may be doubted—and I am one of those who doubt—whether personal motives on your lordship's part may not mingle with the view you take of the case, and whether your known power and influence in this neighbourhood may not have more to do with the decision of the magistrates you mention than the considerations of right and justice."

"Your language, Sir Walter Herbert, is growing insulting," replied the earl, "and, indeed, so has been your whole conduct. I have passed it over, as yet, out of consideration for the foolish fondness which my poor son entertained for a member of your family. It must go no further, however, or you shall find that I am not to be insulted with impunity. The imputations, too, which you cast upon two most respectable men are altogether unworthy; and I beg to say that I shall hear no more upon this or any other subject from you. My lawyer shall have my directions to deal with you, in regard to your debt to me, with moderate determination; and any evidence that you may have collected in reference to the prisoner had better be communicated to the two magistrates who have the case before them. I must beg now to be excused any further conversation on the subject."

"Then I am to understand, my lord," said Sir Walter, "that you positively and distinctly refuse to return to me the bills of exchange which I have, with foolish confidence, placed in your hands."

The earl bowed his head in token of assent, and Sir Walter proceeded: "You will permit me, if you please," he said, "to call in one of my own servants to witness my demand and your refusal."

"That is unnecessary, sir," replied the earl; "I will give you an acknowledgment under my own hand that I have taken possession of certain bills of exchange be-

longing to Henry Langford, accused of felony. Draw it up, sir," he continued, turning to the lawyer.

The lawyer did as he was directed, employing all the most cautious expressions; and the earl, after having read the paper over, signed it, and delivered it to Sir Walter Herbert.

"Your lordship's conduct is certainly most extraordinary," replied Sir Walter; "but this business shall soon be cleared up, for I have determined that I will not rest one moment till the best legal assistance has been procured for the noble gentleman you seem disposed to persecute, and who has been deprived of his liberty upon the accusation of having murdered a person who is by no means proved to be really dead."

He was turning to leave the apartment, and the earl was in the act of directing his lawyer in a low voice to have him arrested at once for the debt, when two or three hard blows upon the door, as if struck with a heavy stick, called the attention of the whole party, and caused the good knight to stop, expecting to see the door open and some one enter. The door, indeed, did open, but it was only pushed forward a small space, just giving room sufficient to admit the head of the half-witted man John Graves.

As soon as he saw him, Sir Walter exclaimed, "Here is one who probably can tell us more of the matter than any one else; for, if I am rightly informed, it was upon his testimony, received second-hand, that these magistrates acted."

"That I can, indeed," said the half-witted man, still standing in the doorway; "I can tell you more about it than any one else, for I saw him buried last night with my own eyes under the beech trees."

"Who? who?" demanded several voices at once; while the earl, with the feelings of a father, breaking forth and overpowering all others, strode forward and gazed in the man's face.

"Why, the boy," replied the other; "the boy Harold; and I came to tell you where he lies."

The earl covered his eyes with his hands, and for a few minutes an awful silence spread through the room. Sir Walter Herbert could not have found in his heart to break in upon the first moment of parental grief for any consideration; and he suffered the bitter agony to have its way, without attempting by one word of consolation

to sooth that deep wound which he himself believed to be incurable, and only likely to be aggravated by any earthly appliance. The lawyer, though feeling very differently, was yet afraid to speak; and Silly John, as he was called, stood gazing upon them, infected by the feelings which he had seen expressed in the countenance of the earl and Sir Walter when he announced the sad confirmation of their worst fears.

It was the earl himself who first broke silence. "Sir," he said, turning abruptly to Sir Walter, "I desire to be alone. This is no time for any other business than that either of mourning for my son or punishing his murderers; with regard to other matters, you shall hear from me hereafter. Your fair scornful daughter, I understand, accompanied you hither, and now waits for you. Pray tell her that, though bound by courtesy to receive the visits of a lady at all seasons, yet at present the heart of the father is not very well attuned to hear consolatory speeches on the death of his only son from the lips of one who first encouraged and then rejected that son's addresses, and who, it would appear, by such conduct brought about his death."

"My lord," replied Sir Walter, mildly, "so deeply am I sorry for you, that I will concede to your sorrow even the privilege of being unjust, and will not defend my child, though she be altogether innocent of that with which you charge her. She is now in Mistress Bertha's room, waiting my coming; and, taking leave of you with deep sympathy for your loss, I will seek her there, and return with her to my own dwelling."

"Seek where you may find, Sir Walter," said Silly John, turning with a lacklustre smile upon the knight; "seek where you may find; for you will not find Mistress Alice or Mistress Bertha either where you think they are; for I saw them stepping quietly up stairs towards the old north tower; and the lady and her lover are by this time looking into each other's eyes."

"This is somewhat too much!" exclaimed the earl, with an angry frown; "this is somewhat too much! I did not know that the young lady was so great a proficient in policy; but, by your leave, Sir Walter, I must interrupt their conference;" and, striding towards the door with flashing eyes, he threw it open and advanced towards the great staircase.

Sir Walter followed quickly, and at the foot of the



stairs touched the earl's arm slightly, with a meaning look, saying, at the same time, "I trust, my lord, that in your present excited state you will not forget who Alice Herbert is, and that her father is present."

The earl turned and gazed at him from head to foot. "I shall not forget *myself*, sir," he replied; "the Earl of Danemore is not accustomed to injure or insult a woman!" and, thus saying, he strode up the stairs with the same quick pace.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

THERE was a thrill in the heart of Alice Herbert as she followed the servant through the long passages of Danemore Castle, which sprang neither from old associations nor from the solemn and, as it were, expecting silence which reigned through the whole building. Since she had last trod those long corridors new feelings had taken possession of her bosom; new thoughts, new hopes, new happiness, had arisen in her heart; and every pulse that throbbed in that heart had some reference to the earnest affection which now dwelt within her. As she passed along, then, following the servant, who, with slow and solemn steps, led the way, she could not but remember that she was probably in the same house with Henry Langford; and a vague fancy that by some means she might see him, if it were but for a moment, made her heart beat and her whole frame tremble.

The room to which she was led was vacant, and she sat down to meditate over the past and the future, both of which had a world of absorbing thoughts and feelings to engage her attention. But yet her eyes wandered round the small chamber, which she had not visited for many years, and she remarked that to the crucifix and missal which usually lay upon a table near the window, marking the faith of the occupier of that apartment, were now added the grinning scull and mouldy bones, which may well serve as mementoes of our mortality.

She had not been there long, however, when the slow stately step of Mistress Bertha was heard near the door,

and the next moment she entered the room, gazing upon Alice with a calm, but somewhat sad expression of countenance as she answered her salutation.

"Good-morrow, Mistress Bertha," said the young lady; "I hope you have been well since we last met, which is now a long time ago."

"Well, quite well, lady," replied Mistress Bertha; "it is a long time ago; and many things have happened in the space between which should not have happened. Fate, however, has had its way. We must all fulfil our destiny; and you and I, as well as others, are but working out what is to come to pass."

"If you mean, Mistress Bertha," said Alice, "that I have not been here of late so frequently as I used to be, I think, when you remember all that has happened, you will not judge that I acted wrongly in making my visits scarce at Danemore, where my father's reception has long been cold."

"I blame you not, Mistress Alice; I blame you not," replied the housekeeper. "What right have I to blame you? You liked him not, you loved him not. That was not your fault, nor the poor boy's either. You were fated for another, and that other fated to snatch from him that which he held dearest. We cannot control our likings and dislikings; they are the work of destiny. There have been those who loved me that I could never love, those who have treated me well and kindly, who through long years befriended me, and with tenderness and affection did all to win regard; and yet, when they had done all, they failed; and, seizing gladly upon some rash word, some hasty burst of passion, I have cast their benefits behind me, and left them because I could not love them. What right, then, should I have to blame others for feeling as I have felt, and doing even less than I have done?"

"I am sure, Mistress Bertha," replied Alice, gently, "I am quite sure, from what I know of you, that, though you might act sharply, you would never act unjustly, and never be guilty of any degree of ingratitude, though you almost accuse yourself of being so."

"You do not know, you do not know," replied the other; "I have been guilty of ingratitude. I know, and acknowledge, and feel, that to her who was kind to me from her youth, whose fathers had protected my fathers, and whose generosity had raised me from low estate,

I know and feel that I was ungrateful; that I could not, that I did not, return her love for love, and that I left her at the first rash and thoughtless word. So far I did wrong and felt evil; but I did no more; my heart was not made, as many another is made, to hate because I knew that I had wronged. I went upon my way and she upon hers, but I sought for no opportunity of doing her ill. On the contrary, I would willingly have atoned for what I had done by serving her in those matters where she felt most deeply. I did serve her as far as I could; but there are things which I must not do, no, not even now."

"I know not to what your words allude," replied Alice, speaking to her gently and kindly, wishing to soothe rather than in any degree to irritate one towards whom she had always experienced feelings of great kindness, and even respect; for, although Mistress Bertha, on many occasions, had given way in her presence to the sharp and unruly temper which evidently existed within her heart, yet the occasions on which it had been exercised, Alice had always remarked, were those where there was either an open and apparent, or a concealed but no less certain cause for the contempt or anger to which she yielded such unbridled sway. "I know not to what your words allude; but I doubt not that you judge of yourself harshly, too harshly, Mistress Bertha, as I have often seen you do in regard to yourself before."

Bertha gave a melancholy smile, and shook her head as she replied, "Young lady, clear your mind of that great error; the greatest, the most pernicious of the poisonous dainties with which human vanity feeds itself in all this world of vain things! We never judge of ourselves too harshly. The brightest and the best, the noblest and the most generous, if they could but look into their own bosoms with eyes as clear and righteous as those that gaze upon them from the sky, would find therein a thousand dark forms and hideous errors, of which their hearts accuse them now but little. Ay; and if, in the whole course of human actions, we could see the current of our various motives separated from each other, how much that is vile and impure should we find mingling with all that we fancy bright and clear! No, no! man never judges himself too harshly, let him judge as harshly as he will. God sees and

judges, not harshly, we hope, but in mercy; and yet, what sins does not his eye discover, what punishments will he not have to inflict!"

Alice was silent; but, after a momentary pause, Bertha resumed the conversation nearly where she had first begun it. "I blame not you," she said, "young lady, for not loving one who loved you. It was not destined so to be, though there may have been a feeling of pride, too, in your dealings with him. The poor boy who is gone had not the eagle eye and ruling look of this one; an eagle eye and ruling look gained from a noble race in other lands; and well do I know how, with young happy things like you, the eyes lead captive the imagination, ay, and fix chains of iron upon the heart. Yet you judged well and nobly too, if I see aright. That face and form are but an image of a mind as bright, and he has every right to have such a mind now that all that was dark, and fierce, and harsh in the proud streams that mingle in his veins has been purified, and tempered, and softened by long adversity."

"Of whom do you speak, Mistress Bertha?" demanded Alice, with a conscious blush mantling in her cheek as she asked the question.

"Of whom do I speak!" echoed Bertha, gazing on her; "would you have me think that you do not know of whom I speak?"

"No!" answered Alice, blushing still more deeply; "no, Mistress Bertha, I do not wish to deceive you. I know, at least I guess, you speak of Captain Langford; but—but—"

Bertha gazed thoughtfully down upon the ground for a few moments: "I had forgot!" she said at length; "yet he did wisely, he always does wisely. But I had not believed that there was a man who, in the unchained moments of the heart's openness, would act so wisely and so well! I understand you, sweet lady. You were not aware that I knew rightly the story of your heart; and I knew it only by having divined it. Yet to show you how well I have divined it, I will tell you the motive that brought you hither with your father. You came with the view of seeing him you love!"

The ingenuous colour once more rose warm in Alice's cheek; but she replied, with that sparkling of truth and sincerity in her pure eyes that there was no doubting one single word, "No, Mistress Bertha," she said,

"you are wrong. I came hither with no such motive, with no such view. My father had business with the earl, so painful, so irritating, that I sought to accompany him solely with the wish to sooth and calm both; but I found, as we rode along, that Sir Walter's mind was already prepared to treat all things gently and kindly, in consideration of Lord Danemore's sad loss; and, therefore, I thought it better to come to this room than to intrude upon the earl's grief till I was quite sure he would be well pleased to see me. But, on my word, the thought of seeing Captain Langford never entered my mind till I was crossing the hall to come hither. Then, indeed, remembering that he had been brought hither, and having learned that he had been most wrongly detained here, at least all yesterday, I thought he might still be here, and that, perhaps, I might see him. Nor will I deny, Mistress Bertha," she added, "that I much wish to do so if it be possible."

"I believe your whole tale, Alice Herbert," replied Bertha; "I believe it all, and every word; for I have seen and watched you from your childhood, and I know that you are truth itself. You shall see your lover, Alice. You shall taste those few bright moments of stolen happiness which are dear, all too dear, to every young heart like thine."

"Nay, nay, Bertha," said Alice, in reply, "though I will not deny that his society is happiness to me, I have a greater object in view; I have to learn how I—I, his promised wife, may aid him at the present, painful moment. Nor, Bertha," she added, while at the very repetition of the words her cheek again grew red, "nor do I wish that the moments spent with him should be, stolen moments. I ask you openly if it be possible to let me see him and speak with him. I wish no concealment. I seek not to hide either my regard for him or my interview with him. Sure I am that my father would approve it, and I have none but him to consider in framing my actions."

Bertha gazed upon her glowing countenance and sparkling eyes, as she raised them, full of timid eagerness, to her face, with a look of pleasure not unmixed with surprise. "You are, indeed, a noble creature and a lovely one," she said; "yours may well be called generous blood. But it shall be as you wish; and yet be under no fear for your lover. They cannot injure him!

It is not his destiny. He is born for a very different fate, and the fools who took him were only tools in Fortune's hands to cut a pathway for him to the point where he is now arrived. Fear not, Alice, but come with me, and you shall see and speak with him; alone, if you will."

"No, not alone!" said Alice, again colouring; "not alone! That were needless, useless."

"Come with me, then," said Bertha; "come with me, then, though it is little needful that you should see him to take counsel with him for his liberation. Ere to-morrow morning he will be free. They cannot hold him there long. To think of holding him there at all is idle and empty; and there is one of them, at least, that feels it to be so, though he knows not well why."

As she spoke she led the way out of the room in which they were, and along the corridor towards the great hall. Alice made no reply; for her heart beat so fast, and her limbs trembled so much, that she was glad to take refuge in silence in order to hide her agitation. She knew that she was going to do nothing but what was right. She felt that every sensation of her heart, every purpose of her mind, was pure, and noble, and good; and yet—why or wherefore she could not tell—there was something in the act of thus going privately to see her lover in the house of another which made her tremble like a guilty creature, though conscious of innocence in thought and deed. She looked anxiously at each door as she passed, lest it should be opened, and some one issue forth to interrupt her. She hurried her pace up the great staircase, gazing round with feelings of apprehension she could not comprehend; and when at length they reached the extremity of the building, and they stood before the last door upon that side, she was obliged to lay her hand upon Bertha's arm and beg her to stop for a moment, in order to recover breath and gain some degree of command over herself.

At length she said, "Now, now I am ready;" and Bertha opened the door of the outer chamber. It was tenanted by a single servant, apparently busy in the ordinary occupations of the day, putting this article of furniture in one place, and that article in another, with that sort of tardy diligence remarkable in houses where there are many servants and but little to do.

He started, however, and turned round when he heard

the door open; and then advancing towards Bertha, he said, "My lord ordered me, Mistress Bertha, not to give any one admission here;" he then added, in a low sort of confidential tone, "the orders came early this morning for me to hang about here, and, when I had done with the rooms, to remain upon the staircase, so as to make sure that the prisoner does not escape, without locking the doors, however; though I don't see why my lord should take such a roundabout way, when, by doing nothing but just turning the key, he could keep the young man in as long as he liked."

"The earl has his reasons for all that he does," replied Bertha, walking on; "you will do very right to stop every one; but, of course, your lord's orders do not apply to me. Come with me, young lady; you may be admitted, as I told you."

The man looked surprised and bewildered; for Mistress Bertha, as he well knew, was not a person to be contradicted with impunity; and yet he feared that he would be doing wrong in letting the two visitors pass.

Half the advantages, however, which are gained in this world, either over our adversaries or rivals, are obtained by taking advantage of their astonishment; and before the man had time to make up his mind as to what he ought rightly to do, Mistress Bertha and Alice had passed him, and the door of the inner chamber was open.

Langford was sitting at the table, writing, and the sound of the opening door made him raise his eyes. For a moment it seemed as if he could scarcely believe that what he saw was real; but then a look of joy and satisfaction, which would have repaid Alice well had she had to encounter a thousand dangers and difficulties in making her way to visit him, spread over his countenance, while, rising up, he advanced to meet her.

Without doubt or hesitation he cast his arm around her and pressed his lip upon her cheek. "Thank you, dearest Alice, thank you," he said; "this is, indeed, most kind and most good; how can I ever show myself grateful enough for such a token of affection?"

Alice burst into tears. To see him sitting there, him that she loved, and honoured, and esteemed, a prisoner, and accused of dark crimes, had wrung her heart almost to agony; but his words, and his look, and the tone of his voice, and the touch of his hand, and the pressure of

his lips seemed to sever the bonds which held the varied emotions struggling together in her breast, and they all burst forth together in that profuse flood of tears.

"It is *we* that must be grateful to you," she said, as soon as she could speak; "it is *we* that must be grateful to you. I cannot help suspecting, nay, believing, that you are suffering in some degree on our account; but, for fear we should not have time to speak fully, let me tell you, Langford, the principal object of my coming here. I was afraid that you might not have means allowed you of communicating with any of your friends, and therefore I was anxious to see you, to ask what can be done for you, what lawyer can be sent for to you, or what means can be taken to prove your innocence."

"My Alice has never doubted my innocence, then," said Langford, gazing tenderly upon her; "I knew, I felt sure she would not."

"Of anything like crime, Langford," she said, "I knew you were innocent, perfectly innocent! I might imagine, indeed—for we women can hardly judge or tell to what lengths you men may think the point of honour should carry them—I might imagine, indeed, that you had taken this unhappy young man's life in honourable quarrel; but even that I did not believe."

"Oh, no!" replied Langford; "I should never dream of such a thing. Nothing could have provoked me to do so. Besides, Alice, did I not give you my word? and, believe me, dear Alice, believe me, now and ever, that I look upon my word given to a woman as binding as my word given to a man. Nay, if it were possible, I should say more binding, because she has fewer means of enforcing its execution. No, no! dear Alice, I parted with him in the park within ten minutes after I left you. It is true, he did try to provoke me to a quarrel, but I was not to be provoked."

"I am ashamed of having doubted you, even in that, and for a moment," replied Alice; "but that doubt sprang solely from a belief that men often thought it a point of honour to conceal their intentions from women in such matters as these, and believe themselves justified in using any means to do so. But now, Langford, tell me, as quickly as possible, what can be done to prove you innocent? what is there that my father or myself can do to free you from a situation so painful?"

"I know little," replied Langford, "that can be done  
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under present circumstances. It is their task to prove that I am guilty, more than mine to show that I am innocent; but I hear steps upon the stairs; who have we here, I wonder?"

As he spoke he opened the door into the other room, which Bertha had closed behind her; and nearly at the same moment, as the reader may have anticipated, the outer door at the top of the stairs was thrown open, and the Earl of Danemore, with a countenance on which hung the thunder-cloud of deep but suppressed wrath, strode in, followed close by Sir Walter Herbert.

The colour came and went rapidly in Alice's cheek, and her heart beat very quick. The servant in the outer room looked tremblingly towards Mistress Bertha; but Bertha herself remained totally unmoved, with her long sinewy hands, clad in their white mittens, resting calmly upon each other, and her dark eyes raised full upon the earl, while not a quiver of the lip or a movement of the eyelids betrayed that she was affected by any emotion whatsoever. Langford drew a little closer to the side of Alice, while the earl turned his first wrath upon the servant.

His words were few and low, but they were fully indicative of what was passing in his heart. "I commanded," said he, "that no one should be admitted here! You have disobeyed my commands. Answer me not a word. You have disobeyed my commands, and you shall have cause to remember it to the last day of your life. Silence, I say! Get you gone, and send hither Wilton and the other groom of the chambers. Madam," he continued, advancing towards Alice, with a bitter and sarcastic sneer curling his lip, "madam, long as I have had the honour of your acquaintance, I did not know that you were so skilful a tactician till to-day. To engage me with your serviceable and convenient father, while you came hither to lay your plans with a personage accused of the murder of my son, is a stroke, indeed, worthy of a great politician—"

Alice had turned pale when first he approached her; but at the words "your serviceable and convenient father," the blood rushed up into her cheek; and though, while turning to look at Sir Walter, whose eyes were beginning to flash with indignation, she suffered the earl to finish his sentence, she stopped him at the word "politician" by raising her hand suddenly, and then re-

plied at once, with her sweet musical voice sounding strangely melodious after the harsh tone in which Lord Danemore had been speaking,

"Forbear, my lord," she said, "forbear! Let me prevent you from using any more words that you will be ashamed of and grieve for hereafter. My motive in coming to this house to-day was anything but that which you imply. I came, my lord, because I feared that my father, justly irritated at some unworthy treatment, might act towards Lord Danemore as Lord Danemore is now acting towards me; that is to say, might speak angry words which he would soon be sorry for. I found, however, my lord, that the kind gentleness of that father's heart was already sufficient to make him forget the injuries which Lord Danemore sought to inflict, in the sorrow which Lord Danemore now experienced; and though there was a time, my lord, when I believed that the voice of Alice Herbert had some power to soothe, to tranquillize, and to console you, I did not flatter myself that such was the case now; and I remained, in consequence, without."

The earl seemed somewhat moved. He had listened in silence, and drew himself up to his full height with an air of attention and thought. When she paused, however, he demanded, in a softer tone, "And your coming here, madam, here, into this room, was, doubtless, perfectly accidental: a singular coincidence brought you into the apartments of this worthy gentleman."

"No, my lord," replied Alice, with a degree of calm dignity that set his sneers at defiance, "quite on the contrary; as soon as I found that Captain Langford was still here, I asked Mistress Bertha to conduct me to see him, which, your lordship will see, was very natural," she added, with the colour becoming deeper and deeper in her cheek, "if you consider, first, that he was severely injured in my defence; next, that I have promised him my hand; and, lastly, that I knew him to be both unjustly charged with a great crime, and in the power of one who sometimes suffers a nature, originally most noble, to be influenced too much by strong passions, and a judgment, originally clear and bright, to be darkened and obscured by his own desires and prejudices. My lord," she added, "the tone which you are pleased to assume towards me obliges me to speak candidly; I thought it very possible that, circumstanced as he is,

and in your power, this gentleman might meet with obstacles in establishing his innocence and in communicating with those who would defend and advise him. Under these circumstances I acted as I have acted, in order to bear any communication from him either to my father or to any other person with whom he might think fit to take counsel."

"Madam," replied the earl, with far less acerbity of manner than before, "I find that you can judge severely too. This gentleman shall have every opportunity of proving his innocence."

"That, my lord, I will take care of," interrupted Sir Walter Herbert; "for I certainly will not trust, in the case of my friend, to the justice of those who, without a shadow of reason, first charged him with a crime of which he is innocent, and then acted towards him as if they had nearly proved him guilty."

"He shall have every opportunity of proving his innocence," reiterated the earl, sternly; "but Sir Walter Herbert is the man who judges too hastily. But yesterday I said to this same gentleman, this Captain Langford, as he is pleased to call himself, that his bare word not to leave these apartments was sufficient. To-day I say that those bolts and bars, strong as they are, are not too strong to guard him withal; for I have not only received, as you well know, the confirmation of my poor son's death, but I have it proved, beyond all doubt, by the testimony of those who saw him, that the man who stands before us, after separating from that son in the park, was seen by four different people galloping up towards the very moor and at the very time at which the unhappy boy was murdered. He shall have the full opportunity of explaining or disproving this hereafter; at present he is a close prisoner here, till he can be removed to-morrow to the county jail."

Alice's cheek grew very pale as the earl spoke; not that she for one moment suffered her confidence in Langford's innocence to be shaken; not that one doubt or one suspicion ever crossed her mind, but that the words used by the earl were such as to call up before the eye of imagination every dark and painful object which could by any chance connect itself with her lover's situation. The image of Langford in the county jail, immured in a close noisome cell as a common felon, together with all that she knew and all that she had

heard of the prisons of England—which were then a disgrace to the land—presented itself to her mind, and made her heart sink within her.

The eyes of her lover, however, were upon her. He saw the colour fade away in her cheek; he saw the anxious quivering of that beautiful lip which had so lately spoken boldly in his defence; but Langford knew and understood the heart whose treasured affection he had obtained; and, taking her hand in his, he pressed it to his lips, saying, "Fear not, dear Alice! Let them do their worst. So confident am I in my own innocence and in the just laws of a free land, that not the slightest apprehension crosses my mind, though I may see a disposition to deny me justice. Strange, too, as it may seem to you, I am well contented to remain in this house for some time longer; and perhaps," he added, "I could, even by a single word, change entirely the feelings and views of its noble owner."

"I may understand you better than you think, sir," replied the earl, gazing upon him with the same knitted brow; "I may know you better than you believe; but you would find it difficult to change my views and purposes. At present I have but to say that I cannot suffer Mistress Alice Herbert to remain here any longer. Bertha," he continued, turning to the housekeeper, "you have done bitterly wrong in bringing her hither. I am willing to believe that you knew not how wrong; but I will deal with you hereafter upon this matter."

"Earl of Danemore, I did right!" replied the woman, "and I tell you that it is you who know not that which you are doing; but the time will come when you will repent."

The earl's brow grew very dark, but he made a great effort to command his passions, and he only replied, "You have served me too faithfully and too long for my anger to have way. But provoke me no further; I am not in a mood to bear with your bold temper. Now, madam," he continued, turning to Alice, "we wait your pleasure."

Langford pressed her hand in his, and grasped that which Sir Walter extended towards him; "Farewell," he said, "farewell for the present. It is useless to stay longer now. All that you can do for me is to engage some person learned in the law to watch the proceedings against me in case I should not be liberated before to-

morrow evening. I fear nothing in the straightforward course of justice ; but there are circumstances in my situation and in my fate"—and, as he spoke, he fixed his eyes on the earl—"which may bring persecution upon me, though they ought to have the most opposite effect."

The earl returned his look steadfastly and sternly, then turned upon his heel, and, waving his hand ceremoniously towards the door, followed Sir Walter and Alice out of the room. He found the servants that he had sent for at the head of the stairs, and gave them charge to guard the prisoner better than he had been previously guarded ; to keep the door constantly locked ; and to remain, the one at watch on the outside of the door, while the other kept guard at the foot of the stairs. He then walked slowly down into the vestibule, and, in cold silence on all parts, saw Sir Walter and his daughter mount their horses and depart.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

COULD we but have the heart of the wicked laid open before us ; could we but see how it is torn and wrung by the evil passions that harbour within it ; could we but mark how, even in the strongest and most determined breast, when bent upon evil purposes or engaged in wicked acts, fear and apprehension go hand in hand with every deed of evil, while repentance, remorse, and punishment follow more slowly, though not less surely, in the distance ; what an instructive, what an awful lesson it would be, and how fearfully we should shrink back from the commission of the first crime, as the brink of a precipice which, once overleapt, dashes us down over a thousand pointed rocks, even into the gulf of hell itself !

When Sir Walter and Alice Herbert had left him, the Earl of Danemore pressed his hand upon his burning brow for a few moments, while wild and thrilling thoughts—all painful, all angry, all evil—crossed and recrossed each other through his brain. He then turned with a rapid step, and entered the room where the lawyer had lingered behind, fearing to follow to a scene

where the violent passions which he knew existed in his patron's breast were likely to be excited into fury. The earl closed the door, and, casting himself down into a chair, covered his eyes with his hands.

He was roused, however, in a moment, by a voice saying, "Do not grieve so, Danemore; do not grieve so. It's a sad thing, truly, to have one's fine boy killed, and never see him again; but we must all die once, and you'll die too, and very likely not long first, for you are an old man now. Then we shall be all comfortable again when we get on the other side of the mole's habitation. Let me speak to him, Master Kinsight; why should not I comfort him? We should all comfort each other."

"I have been trying, my lord," said the lawyer, in an apologetic tone, as the earl raised his eyes towards the half-witted man, "I have been trying to get out of this foolish fellow who were the people that he saw bury your lordship's noble son. He acknowledges that he knows them all, but declares that he will never mention the names of any of them."

The earl passed his hand once or twice before his eyes, as if to clear away other images from before his mental vision ere he returned to the subject which was again suddenly presented to him.

"He shall be made to tell," said he, at length, in a stern tone, knitting his dark brows as he spoke; "he shall be made to tell after he has pointed out the spot where the poor boy lies."

"Why, my lord," answered the lawyer, "we do not need his help for that, as he himself says that it was under the beech trees by the mere; but I am sure I do not know how your lordship will make him speak, for I have been trying for this half hour, threatening him with your lordship's displeasure, and to have him put in the cage, and everything I could think of, but without effect."

"There are ways would make the dumb speak," replied the earl. "I have seen—" he continued; but then, suddenly breaking off, he changed his form of speech, and added, "I have heard, I mean to say, of old Spaniards in the New World who loved their gold better than their life, and would have died sooner than reveal the spot where their treasures were hidden; and yet there have been found ways to make them speak, there

have been found means to make them scream forth the name of every treasure-cave they had."

"But, my lord," replied the lawyer, with a somewhat apprehensive look, "but, my lord, you know, in this country, we dare not make use of any such means."

The earl gazed at him sternly, and yet somewhat contemptuously. "We will do everything lawfully, Master Lawyer," he said; "we will do everything lawfully. First, we are justified, I think, in keeping this good man in strict confinement till he has declared the names of the murderers or their accomplices. Next, I believe there is no law which can compel us, till he is fully committed, to give him either meat or drink; neither are we told that light must be admitted to the place where he is held. Dost thou hear, Sir Fool! If thou tellest not immediately the names of all those who were engaged in this hellish act, thou shalt be shut up without a crust of bread, or a drop of water, or a ray of light; and hunger, and thirst, and darkness shall be your companions till you do tell."

The unhappy man gazed in his face for a moment with a wandering and a haggard look, as if he scarcely understood or believed the menaces held out to him. He replied at length, however, in a low sad tone, "I have vowed a vow, and it can't be broken. They call me mad, but I never broke a promise or told a falsehood in my life. Let the wise ones say as much if they can. No! you may quench the light of these eyes for ever; you may deny me food, or make me perish of thirst, but you shall never make me tell one word more than I have told."

"We shall see," replied the earl, "we shall see;" and he added a few indistinct words to the lawyer, who withdrew, and almost immediately returned again, accompanied by two or three of the lower grade of serving men, who instantly laid hands upon the object of the earl's indignation, and dragged him out of the room, to fulfil the orders which they previously received by the mouth of the attorney.

After they were gone Lord Danemore paused for a moment thoughtfully, and the shadows of dark passions might be seen traversing his high and haughty brow. Ere he spoke he recovered his calmness, and there was even a degree of melancholy in his tone as he said, "Men drive me to things that I would not willingly do.

It is not the fault of the lion that he is a beast of prey, nor would he, except when pressed by need, destroy or devour any being if the hunters did not torment him by pursuit. There is a weakness in my heart towards this youth which must be conquered. I cannot view him as the murderer of my son, although the tidings we have this day received would in some degree prove this to be the case. Nevertheless, I will conquer such feelings. I will overcome such folly, for these very papers prove more than ever that it is necessary he should be removed from my path."

As he spoke he laid his hand on the packet of bills of exchange, which had been sealed up and remained upon the table.

The lawyer gazed in his face with a look of some wonder and inquiry; but the earl proceeded without explanation.

"You will act as we before determined," he said; "the evidence that we have got is now strong; you will take means still further to strengthen it. There wants but one link in the chain. Among all those that you know in the country round, cannot some one be found, think you, to supply that link? some poacher, some deer-stealer, who may have seen the shot fired, or the blow struck, while lurking about on his unlawful avocations? Some one who might merit forgiveness for his other offences by bearing testimony in this matter!"

The lawyer looked down and hesitated. Although his nature was no ways scrupulous, yet the bold, straightforward, uncompromising decision of his patron rather than encouraged him.

"I will do my best, my lord," he said, in a low tone; "nothing shall be wanting that I can do; but at the same time, if we can let the matter prove itself, it would be much better than risking anything by manufacturing alarmed testimony."

"See that he escape me not," said the earl, sternly; "see that he escape me not. Wo be unto you should he do so. Trifle not with petty means, sir. Timidity in such matters is ruin. Boldly, fearlessly, but skilfully and carefully, pursue your plan. You have already the strongest of all foundations to build upon. See that you build well, or you shall answer to me for it. And now to other matters, though connected, as you will see, with that of which we have spoken. This Sir



Walter Herbert must be dealt with immediately. If we do not at once engage him so deeply in his own affairs that he shall have neither time, nor wish, nor opportunity to meddle with others, he will find means to mar our schemes and disappoint all our expectations. Besides, you know my feelings on the subject; with him the matter must be brought to a speedy conclusion."

"That may well be done, my lord," replied the lawyer; "now that he has tendered you, in payment of his debt, that which you cannot accept, it is very natural that you should immediately take measures against him. I myself am not much skilled in such matters, and might make some mistake; but I saw yesterday at the town-house a person who is now down here upon some special business, whom I can well trust, and who will, I know, so manage the matter that, once having fixed his hands upon this knight, no turn, no shift, no evasion, scarcely even the power of the law itself, will make him let go his hold."

"Indeed!" said the earl, "indeed! Pray, who is this tenacious personage?"

"His name, my lord, is Bolland," replied the lawyer; "he is a man who in the good city of London has made himself a reputation little inferior to that of a great general. His origin, indeed, was somewhat low, having been a butcher in the city, a bankrupt, with some suspicion of fraud in his transactions, and, for a certain period, we are told, a gambler in a small way of trade."

"A goodly commencement for a future lawyer," said the earl, with a bitter sneer curling his lip; "of course he has prospered in the world?"

"Your lordship's pardon," replied the other, somewhat sharply; "he is no lawyer, nor has aught to do with the law but in following its mandates. He is now a sheriff's officer of the county of Middlesex, but he is not one to scruple at where he exercises his calling. I have heard that he is amassing great wealth by the skill with which he deals with his poor patients; sometimes suffering them to go at large on payment of a weekly sum; sometimes even furnishing them with money when he thinks that, by putting them in this or that calling, he can ensure to himself cent. per cent. repayment; but never does he suffer any one to slip through his fingers; and, if your lordship will permit me, I will

mount my horse directly, seek out Master Bolland, and charge him to execute a writ against this Sir Walter."

"Do, do," said the earl; "but yet," he continued, "I fear that all we can do will hardly be in time to prevent this meddling old man—fool I will not call him, for fool he is not—from taking such steps as may embarrass our proceedings."

"I do not know, my lord," replied the lawyer, "I do not know; but one thing I can answer for, that if you but trust the matter to me and Bolland, and pay him well for his trouble, Sir Walter Herbert shall be in the county jail ere the sun goes down to-night."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the earl, "that were quick indeed. Promise him this night a hundred pounds if he contrives to execute the writ as you mention. Now go," continued the earl; "no time must be lost."

But, as he saw the lawyer rise to obey his directions, a look of doubt and hesitation came over his countenance for a moment. "My poor boy loved the girl," he said, "and therein there is a tie between those Herberts and myself which I feel to be a weakness, and yet it comes upon me even now, when I think I am destroying the father of one for whom he felt so tenderly. Stay, Master Attorney, stay! My poor boy loved the girl!"

Accursed be all those, doubly accursed, who, when better feelings are coming over our hearts; when the well of sweet waters is gushing up, which is found somewhere in almost every desert; when a touch of human affection is softening the harsh asperity of anger, blunting the sting of hatred, or relaxing the iron grasp of revenge! accursed be all those, I say, who at such moments come in, and rouse up again within us the evil passions that have been lulled to sleep, and might, perchance, be strangled in their slumber, if some fiendish voice from without did not waken them into fresh activity.

The lawyer saw the shade of unwonted gentleness that passed over his patron's countenance with pain, for his own mind was made up altogether of considerations of petty interest, and he foresaw loss in any relaxation of the other's harsh determinations.

With the skill of a demon, he instantly perceived how he might turn the rare drop of honey into gall and bitterness; and he replied, "Yes, my lord, he did love

her ; he did love her dearly, but she did not love him as he deserved to be loved ; and the last most painful feelings of all his life were brought about by her conduct to him."

"It is true," said the earl, frowning ; "it is true ! Go, and lose no time. I have a sad task before me in the mean time, and I would fain have intrusted you with it, Master Kinsight, but it cannot be. You would not have time and opportunity to accomplish both."

"Pray what may it be, my lord !" demanded the lawyer, eagerly, fearful of losing some other lucrative occupation. "My business with Bolland will be over in a minute. I give him but directions, and trust the rest to him. Pray what may it be !"

"Can you not divine, man !" demanded the earl, fixing his large stern eyes upon him ; "can you not divine, that it is to seek and bring home the dead body of my unhappy son from the spot where this idiot says they have laid him !"

"Oh ! my lord," exclaimed the lawyer, with some touch of human feeling breaking even through his sordid nature, like a misty ray of sunshine streaming through a dark cloud ; "oh ! my lord, such is no task for you. It would wring your heart sadly to be present yourself. Besides, the magistrates ought to be there. Now, after I have spoken with Bolland, and left the business in his hands, I shall have plenty of time to see Sir Matthew Scrope and Sir Thomas Waller, and go with them to the spot. Leave it to me, my lord, leave it to me ; and if I bring those two worthy justices over here with me, we may, perhaps, find some means of making this half-witted man give us further information regarding the murderers."

"Bring them not ! bring them not !" replied the earl, vehemently. "Mark me, my good friend ! In this matter I am moved by many very opposite feelings. You know—you must feel, for you are a father yourself—how I thirst to discover, and to drink the heart's blood of my son's murderer ! and yet I doubt that this fool, if forced to speak to any other ear but my own, might reveal matter which might tend to exculpate him whom we have there shut up above, and who must be swept from my path if I would have any peace during my remaining years. I am not a man to live in doubt or hesitation ; and, as soon as any man gives me cause to fear

him, the matter between us must be brought to an issue at once, and he or I must fall! No," he added, "no! bring not those men hither, I am sick of them. We must use them as tools, but not let them use us. Take them, then, with you to search under the beech trees, but bring them not hither! When all is done, return yourself and let me know. I shall have occupation enough in the mean time to busy my thoughts with things less sad, though not less painful, perhaps, than the task which I make over to you; and now go quickly."

"Shall I take these papers with me?" demanded the lawyer, laying his hand upon the packet of bills of exchange which had been sealed up before Sir Walter Herbert.

"No!" answered the earl, sternly; "leave them where they are."

"I thought they were to be deposited with me," rejoined the agent, with a lingering affection for the money which he could not restrain, even though he feared to offend his patron.

"I say, sir, leave them where they are, and go upon your errand," rejoined the earl, in a tone that could not be misunderstood; and, without uttering another word, he pointed towards the door, and drove the lawyer out of the room by the fierce sternness of his gaze.

As soon as he was gone and the door closed, the earl took up the packet and deliberately broke the seals; then examined each of the papers minutely, muttering, as he did it, "I thought so, I thought so; they have watched all that I have done; they have tracked me from land to land, and they have gained that knowledge of my past deeds which they think will give them power over me, and force me to do that which they know I would never do without. But they shall find themselves mistaken. Yet when I think upon all the past, the memory of friendship and of love is stronger even than hatred and apprehension; and I find that the lines graven on the soft heart of youth in early days may be crossed and traversed by many others in after life, but can never wholly be erased. Would to God that they had not driven me to it! Would to God that they did not thrust themselves in the path of one who is forced to go forward on his way; who cannot, who must not go back; who must trample on all that oppose him! But I am weak again; I am weak to think of such things. He

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has sought his fate, and he must find it. Yet I will see him once more ; I will make myself sure of myself and of him before I do that which can never be recalled ; but not now ; not in the broad day. He is too like the dead ; and the dark glimmer of the lamp, or the blue gleam of the lightning gives the only light by which we should meet. I doubt that woman Bertha, too ; I doubt her much : but yet I love not to question her about such things ; for she will come harshly upon the bitter subject of the past, and will turn once more those memories, which time is softening and rendering more gentle, into all that is dark, and bitter, and fearful."

Such were some of the words that broke from the bosom of a man torn by contending passions. They were spoken also : they were words as well as thoughts ; for he was one with whom the struggles of the impatient spirit within, especially in his solitary moments, often mastered the guard set habitually upon the lips, and gave voice to thoughts and feelings when alone which he most anxiously concealed when the watchful and oppressive world was round about him.

Again and again he looked over those papers, and again and again some new comment sprang to his lips ; but his thoughts evidently became more and more painful as his mind was drawn forcibly back to dwell upon the past ; and at length, covering his eyes with his hands, he gave way to many a bitter and mingled feeling, and groaned aloud in agony of heart as he recollected the deeds he had done, the flowers he had trampled on, the treasures he had scattered from his path, never to be found again.

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## CHAPTER XX.

ABOUT four hours after the period at which we closed the last chapter, a number of persons were to be seen collected between the grove of beech-trees on the moor and the long sheet of shallow water called Upwater Mere. They were of a varied and motley character ; for there might be seen the worshipful and the honourable of the county on horseback ; and thence downward, going in progression through the ownership of many a

four-footed beast, appeared all classes of the community, till you came to the poorest of poor labourers, who had not even a cur to follow him.

At the head of the group, and leading its operations with pompous dignity, appeared the portly persons of Sir Matthew Scrope and Sir Thomas Waller; and behind them again, prompting their motions, though appearing to submit to their will, were four other personages on horseback; that is to say, their own joint clerk as justices of the peace; Master Nicholas, clerk of the receiver of the county, whose narrow escape from the hands of the Philistines we have recorded in another place; Master Kinsight, attorney-at-law, agent and lawyer to the Earl of Danemore; and a certain black-bearded, round-faced, keen-eyed gentleman, strong, though not long, in limb, mounted upon a spirited blood nag, with a certain knowing look both about master and beast which betokened in each great acquaintance with the ways of the world.

The lawyer Kinsight called him Master Bolland, and often commented to him in a whisper upon the proceedings of the party they accompanied. Bolland rarely made any verbal reply, but he looked volumes; and the wink of his black eye was made, by its different characters, to express almost as many things as Lord Burleigh's shake of the head.

The greater part of the body had come thither in procession from the neighbouring county town. Some had joined it in the way, and some had been found already waiting on the heath; but, as soon as the whole party was assembled by the side of the beech trees, a perquisition was commenced in order to discover any ground which might seem to have been recently moved; and, ere any long search had been made, a part of the thin green turf showed, amid the rank blades of grass which covered the ground beneath the trees, a quantity of scattered mould, clearly indicating that there was the spot they sought.

As soon as this discovery was made, a new difficulty presented itself. It was found that, with a degree of foresight common to county magistrates in those days, the worthy and worshipful knights who came to exhume the body reported to be interred there had forgotten to order any spades, shovels, or pickaxes to be brought with them; and there they were, in the midst

of a wide moor where no implement of the kind was to be found within a mile or two. On the first mention of this want, one of the more active of the lads who had accompanied the party set off as hard as his legs would carry him in the direction of the little town of Moor-hurst; but, as that town was at several miles distance, some of the other persons present suggested that it would be better to send up to the farm which had lately been taken by Farmer Gray, just upon the edge of the moor; and, while this suggestion was actually being followed, a discussion naturally arose in regard to Farmer Gray, his character, habits, appearance, station, fortune, and farm.

"Ay, he has got a bad bargain of it," said a sturdy farmer, in a white smock frock, which concealed the greater part of a strong short-backed pony that he bestrode; "ay, he has got a bad bargain of it; and, if he do not mind what he's about, he'll do for himself. I might have had the farm for an old song if I had liked, but I'd have nothing to do with such poor swampy stuff. Why the place has been out of lease for two years."

"He'll do very well," grunted another of the same class. "I'm sorry I did not take the place myself. He'll do very well; he comes from Lincolnshire, and knows that sort of land. At least I saw 'Franklin Gray, Squash-lane, Lincolnshire,' upon one of his carts. He'll do very well. He has the finest horses in the country, too."

"I wonder you call those fine horses, Master Brown," said a respectable labourer, who overheard the conversation; "they are no more fitted for hard work than my sick wife Jane; and as for the matter of that, Farmer Gray will never be much liked hereabout, for he's brought all his own labourers with him, and that's a hard case upon the people of the place. They say he has been a soldier, too; and I'm sure he don't look like a farmer, or anything half as honest. Why he goes about in a laced jacket, like a gentleman; and I never saw him at market, not I."

"I'll tell you what," cried a sturdy drover, who had joined the group, "he's as good a judge of cattle, for all that, as any man in this country. He knows a beast when he sees it, do'sn't he? Why, he bought half a score of me the other day, and paid me down, drink-money and all, without a word."

Such were comments that took place upon Franklin Gray in one of the groups into which the party had divided itself. Something similar, with a very slight variation from the different class and character of the speakers, was taking place among the rest; and all the little investigating spirit which is excited by the arrival of a stranger in a country place, especially if that stranger be somewhat reserved in his habits, was exercising itself in regard to Franklin Gray among the whole of the assembly on the moor.

Lawyer Kinsight ventured to hint that he suspected Farmer Gray had been a bankrupt in Lincolnshire before he came into their county; but this was instantly contradicted by several others who had had dealings with him, and who represented him as possessing all those excellent qualities which gold invariably bestows upon its owner. Two or three of the young men talked of Farmer Gray's beautiful wife, but declared she was as coy and backward as if she had been old and ugly. Some had only caught a sight of her; some had heard her speak; and some had never even seen her, but were in raptures with her beauty on the mere report of others. What between the rumours of the wife's beauty, the husband's wealth, and the report of his wearing a laced jacket, like a gentleman, Sir Matthew Scrope and Sir Thomas Waller found the two organs of curiosity and reverence in their respective brains considerably excited regarding Franklin Gray, and they entered into slow and solemn discussion as to whether, under existing circumstances, they should or should not pay him a formal visit.

At the end of about half an hour, however, some one was seen coming slowly across the moor on horseback, accompanied by two or three others; and in due time appeared the person who had been sent for the spades and shovels, accompanied by Franklin Gray himself, with two or three men furnished with implements for digging. Gray was mounted on a fine powerful horse, full of fire and activity, which he sat in a very different manner from that in which the personages around him bestrode their beasts; and there was something, indeed, in his whole appearance and demeanour which made the greater part of the men assembled take off their hats as he rode up.

There was only one person present, with the excep-



tion of the drover, who showed the slightest sign of recognition, and that was Master Bolland, who gave a sudden start, and then turned pale, as the stern fierce eye of Franklin Gray fixed for a moment full upon him, with a meaning, perhaps a menacing look. He ventured upon no other token of acquaintanceship, however; and Gray, riding up at once to the magistrates, bowed to them somewhat haughtily, and said, "I am happy to hear from this good man that your worships have discovered the place where this poor young nobleman's body has been concealed; indeed, I expected no less from your known wisdom, as soon as I heard that you had taken the matter in hand. I have now come down at once to offer you every assistance in my power, and say that I hope some means will be immediately taken for putting a stop to all these terrible things that are daily occurring in the county. Indeed, no one is so much interested as I am; for, having taken this lonely farm here, I am obliged to cross the moor constantly, often with large sums about me, and it is but fit that we should have protection under such circumstances."

"That it is, indeed, Master Gray," said Master Nicholas, the clerk; "I am just in the same condition as yourself; and I hope, at the very next meeting of the magistrates, something will be done."

"Depend upon it, depend upon it!" said Sir Matthew Scrope, "something shall be done, Master Nicholas; something shall be done, Master Franklin Gray! I should be very glad to confer with you on the subject, sir," he added, addressing the latter, for whom his reverence was getting very high; "and we will taste together my last year's cider, which is now just in its prime. But now let us fall to work;" and he and the rest accordingly dismounted from their horses, and directed the labourers whom they had brought with them to dig up that part of the ground which bore marks of having been lately moved.

Shovelful after shovelful of earth was thrown out, and the work had proceeded some way, when, cantering quickly along the road, appeared two or three persons, who proved to be Sir Walter Herbert and his servants. The countenances of Sir Matthew Scrope and Sir Thomas Waller immediately fell, and the first impulse of the former was to bid the workmen suspend their proceedings; after which he turned to his comrade, beckoned

up the clerk and the Earl of Danemore's lawyer, and held with them a quick whispering conference apart.

In the mean while Sir Walter came up and dismounted from his horse, while every head was uncovered around, and every face beamed with a smile of pleasure and satisfaction to see him there.

"I have come," he said, "gentlemen, to be a witness of the execution of that painful task which you have undertaken, and to see, perhaps for the last time, the body of my poor young friend, Lord Harold, whose death has unfortunately been made a pretext for accusing another friend, not less noble and excellent, of a foul and horrible crime."

"Pretext, sir, pretext," exclaimed Sir Thomas Waler, "I do not know what you mean by pretext. Do you mean to charge me, sir? Do you mean to insinuate, sir? Should such imputations as these go on, I shall certainly order the work to be suspended, for we are not going to proceed with this matter to be insulted."

"Sir Thomas," replied the other, "I have no intention of insulting you; and the only effect of your ordering the work to be suspended will be, that I shall order it to go on. You forget, sir, that I am not only a magistrate as well as yourself, but lord of the manor on which you stand. Go on, my good fellows, and make good speed!"

The men required no other authority, but with redoubled activity plied their work, and in a few moments a long deal case was discovered, rudely put together. The labourers tried to take the top off at once, but they could not accomplish it; and, after digging round it on all sides, they lifted the heavy burden carefully out and laid it upon the edge of the pit. The whole crowd gathered round, pressing somewhat roughly upon the principal personages, who occupied the front stations about the grave. Sir Matthew Scrope put on his spectacles, and rubbed his hands as if arriving near some long-desired consummation. Sir Walter Herbert stood near the foot of the coffin, if it could be so called, and gazed upon it with a brow of sorrow and something bright glistening in his eyes. Franklin Gray looked on sternly, with his arms crossed upon his broad bull-like chest, and his brow gathered into a heavy frown.

There was some difficulty in wrenching up the top.

But at length one of the labourers, forcing the spade between it and the sides, tore it open, and exposed to view the ghastly spectacle of death within.

Those who were without saw nothing but the form of a dead man; but among those who immediately surrounded the chest there were exclamations of surprise, which made the rest press forward to get a nearer view, and it was then perceived by all who had known Lord Harold that the body was that of a stranger. In the centre of the forehead was a small round wound, spreading from which on every side was a dark discoloured bruise, and a considerable quantity of blood had run down and disfigured the face, on which it had been suffered to remain. Still the features were sufficiently distinct to show every one that this was not the corpse that they expected to find; and though each countenance around was pale with agitation and awe, yet on the lip of Sir Walter Herbert and of many others there appeared a smile of hope renewed.

That smile was almost immediately done away, however, when they could look farther, for across the breast of the dead man lay a paper on which was written, in a large bold hand, "The punishment of him who shot Edward Lord Harold."

The first who read the paper was the magistrate's clerk, and the words were circulated in a low murmur from one to another around. But at the same time Master Nicholas, the clerk to the receiver of the county, pressed forward as if moved by some sudden impulse, and, getting as near the head of the corpse as he could, he gazed eagerly in its face, exclaiming, "It is; yes, I declare it is. It is the very same man that I saw lying on the road that night when the robbers laid hold of Mistress Alice Herbert; and he was one of them, too, beyond all doubt!"

"Doubtless it must be the same," said Franklin Gray, gravely. "I think I never saw a more rascally countenance in my life, or one that seemed more likely to deserve the fate that he has met with."

"His clothes are very good, however," said Sir Matthew Scrope; "they don't look like those of a robber. Why, I declare there is as much lace as would cost two or three marks any day."

"It's the same man, however," reiterated Master Nicholas; "that I will swear to; and that he was a

robber, there can be little doubt, from what happened to Mistress Alice Herbert. Is it not so, Sir Walter?"

"Undoubtedly," replied Sir Walter. "There is no doubt: there can be no doubt that robbery was their purpose. Nor is it improbable that this is one of them. One man was wounded and disarmed by my excellent friend, Captain Langford. The other was beaten down and stunned by the poor innocent John Graves, and he it was, Master Nicholas, whom you saw upon the road. Let all these matters be taken down," he continued, looking round him for some one who was capable of the task.

"Where is the coroner?" Sir Walter demanded abruptly, when he could not discover that officer amid those around. "That officer should have been here. Why was he not summoned? When a body supposed to be murdered is discovered buried in a lonely common like this, it is natural to ask, where is the coroner? and to deprecate excessively his not being on the spot. May I ask, Sir Matthew, whether, in all the informal and somewhat extraordinary steps which you have thought fit to take, you have remembered the simple one of calling to your aid the coroner of the county?"

"Why, sir," replied Sir Matthew Scrope, in some confusion, "we were so hurried to decide, we were so pressed onward for time, that I do not know how it was the coroner was forgotten."

"In short, sir," replied Sir Walter Herbert, "you forgot all except that which might serve your own purpose; you forgot all except that which might condemn an innocent man; and the regular course of justice in the land was in no degree attended to! This must be remedied. I, as a magistrate, must demand that the coroner be instantly sent for. He should have witnessed the exhumation. He should have been present at every step through all this business; and you, my good friends, the yeomen of this county, will witness that, in taking cognizance of these transactions, the proper officer of the crown has not been upon the spot, has not received any summons to attend, and that, from the very beginning to the close, two magistrates alone have conducted the whole investigation, showing a great disinclination to any open inquiry into their conduct or purposes."

"That we will. That we will," cried several voices;

and one or two persons from the little town of Moorhurst gave point to Sir Walter's charge, by mentioning the name of Langford, and declaring that he had won the love of all around him instead of injuring anybody.

At the same time, however, the attorney was seen whispering eagerly to Master Bolland, who, on his part, seemed to show some slight degree of hesitation, listening silently to the promptings of the lawyer, eyeing from time to time Sir Walter Herbert, and then scanning the crowd around.

Sir Matthew Scrope by this time was at the end of his eloquence: and though he swelled and coloured like an offended turkey-cock, he made no reply to Sir Walter Herbert. The other magistrate, however, bristled up in his own defence, vowed that what they had done in regard to Langford was perfectly justifiable, and ended by striking his clinched fist upon his thigh, and swearing, with not a very worshipful oath, that the prisoner should be fully committed to the county jail the very next day, in spite of all the Walter Herberts in the land.

The old knight was about to reply, and probably, in the heat of the moment, might have said things that he would afterward have regretted; but, during Sir Thomas Waller's angry declaration, Master Bolland had walked round; and now, with a thin slip of parchment in his hand, he laid his finger on Sir Walter Herbert's shoulder, saying, "Sir Walter Herbert, Knight, I arrest you in the name of the sheriff of the county of — at the suit of the Earl of Danemore."

The old man turned very pale, and put his hand to his head, saying, "This is most strange and most unhandsome!"

The people who stood around were all taken by surprise, and felt more or less a sense of grief, compassion, and indignation, so that there came a profound silence for the space of about a minute over the whole multitude. Even Sir Matthew Scrope and Sir Thomas Waller gazed as well as the rest with painful emotions in the pale but noble countenance of the old knight of Moorhurst, as, standing by the side of the dead body which they had so lately disinterred, he felt a momentary regret that he himself was not cold, and silent, and feelingless, like it.

The silence lasted for about a minute, but then it was

suddenly broken by an unexpected event. One of the young farmers, who had been standing by Bolland and the lawyer while they conversed, glanced from the honoured countenance of Sir Walter Herbert to the shrewd mean face of Master Kinsight. He seemed to struggle during that temporary silence with strong emotions; but then, giving way to a burst of unconquerable indignation, he struck the lawyer a violent blow in the face with his clinched fist, exclaiming, "D—n thee! it is thou that hast done all this mischief!"

The lawyer was stretched with that one blow at his feet, with the blood starting from his mouth and nostrils. A general commotion took place among the people; violent hands were laid instantly upon Bolland. They declared that "Sir Walter, good Sir Walter, should not be taken from among them." The magistrates in vain endeavoured to interpose; and the peasantry, trampling the lawyer under their feet, dragged the sheriff's officer forward to the side of the mere, declaring they would half drown him for his pains, and do the same to Matthew Scrope and Sir Thomas Waller if they did not get upon their horses and ride away with all speed.

The warning was not lost upon them; but each scrambled upon his beast, and, followed by their clerk and Master Nicholas, got out of the affray as fast as they could, and made the best of their way back to the county town, where they arrived as the evening was just closing in.

In the mean while Bolland was saved from the fate prepared for him by the voice of Sir Walter Herbert, who with much difficulty made himself heard, and induced the peasantry to release the bailiff.

"Master Officer," he added, as soon as he saw that the people had taken their unwilling hands off Bolland, who, with his under jaw stuck out and his hat knocked off his head, remained standing, with an air of dogged determination, by the side of the water, "Master Officer, having been appointed to see the law executed, I am not one to resist it, and am ready to submit to your arrest this moment!"

"Hang me if thou shalt!" cried one of the farmers. "If that man put a finger on thee again, I'll beat the soul out of him; so look to it, bailiff! and with your leave, Sir Walter, we'll see you safe down to your own house; for go with him you sha'n't, whether you like it or not!"

Sir Walter looked with some degree of hesitation in the face of the officer, who nodded as if to signify that he understood him, and then replied aloud, "It's no use, sir, it's no use! The writ's gone to the devil amid these mad people, so you had better do what they would have you."

"So be it, then," replied Sir Walter Herbert; "and I doubt not, ere to-morrow, to be able to raise funds to discharge this claim of Lord Danemore's. But now let us look after that unworthy but unfortunate man Kin-sight, whom I saw knocked down and trampled upon. My good friends, you have been violent, much too violent in this business. No one has a right to interrupt the course of the law, far less to injure those who, however ungenerously they may demean themselves, are not overstepping its authority."

While Bolland slunk away, and, joining a group of people from the county town who had held aloof from the affray, mounted his horse, and made his way across the moor, Sir Walter returned to the spot where the attorney had been knocked down, and beheld, with feelings of great pain and anxiety, that, though he still breathed, he was quite insensible, and had evidently received various severe injuries. It was in vain that he endeavoured to impress upon the peasantry about him that a great wrong and a great crime had been committed.

The only answer he could obtain was, "It serves him right!" and with difficulty he prevailed upon some of the labourers to place the hurt man upon the cover of the large wooden case they had dug up, and to carry him down to the small town of Moorhurst, in order to obtain medical assistance. The body of the dead man which they had disinterred—and which has been already recognised by the reader as that of the robber Wiley—was also carried down to Moorhurst; and, before he even returned to the Manor House, Sir Walter despatched a messenger to the coroner, briefly narrating the events that had occurred.

While the rescue of Sir Walter Herbert was taking place, Franklin Gray had remained looking on, with his arms folded on his chest, and an expression of no slight satisfaction curling his lip. As soon as Bolland, however, was set free and rode away, Gray threw himself upon his horse again, and galloped after him over the

moor. He overtook him at the distance of about four miles from the county town, and called to him by his name. It was evident, from the countenance of Bolland, as he turned round to see who it was that followed him, that he had no great taste for Franklin Gray's society. The other, however, pushed on his horse till he came upon a line with him; and then, just touching him with the cane he carried in his hand, he said, "Stop a moment, Master Bolland, I want a word with you."

"Do you mean really to say *stop*?" demanded Bolland, with a grim smile. "How am I to take you, captain?"

"Why, not in the sense you're afraid of," answered Gray; "I only want to ask you a question. Are you fully aware, Master Bolland, that I could hang you to-morrow if I liked it?"

Bolland hesitated, but then replied, "Why, perhaps I could do the same good turn for you, captain."

"That would be difficult," answered Gray. "I know my own fate, Master Bolland; and though there is no fear of my ever dying in my bed like a consumptive schoolgirl, there is as little chance of my dying on a scaffold. As to you, you are as sure of being hanged as if the rope were now round your neck;\* but I, for my part, have no wish to put it there, and I want a plain answer to my simple question. Are you fully aware that I could hang you to-morrow if I liked it?"

"To be candid with you, Master Gray," replied Bolland, "I believe you might if you have still got a certain awkward piece of paper in your hands; but I think it would be a dangerous matter for you to undertake, for I might give the beaks a clew—"

"That has nothing to do with the question," rejoined Gray; "all I wanted to be sure of was that you knew how we stood towards each other. I like to have some hold upon gentlemen of your cloth, who think fit to look as if they had seen me before."

"Oh, I am a man of honour, captain," replied Bolland;

\* He was, indeed, tried some years afterward for forgery, and made a very brilliant defence on his trial, which, however, availed him nothing. He was hanged for the offence, which was one of the least crimes he had committed; and at his death were disclosed a thousand acts of infamy which had been perpetrated by him under the mantle of our dreadful law of imprisonment for debt.



"you know I would not do an unhandsome thing by a gentleman for the world."

"I am now quite sure that you would not do so by me," replied Gray; "so good-night, Master Bolland." And, thus speaking, he turned his horse and galloped off over the moor, upon which the shades of night were now rapidly descending.

END OF VOL. I.

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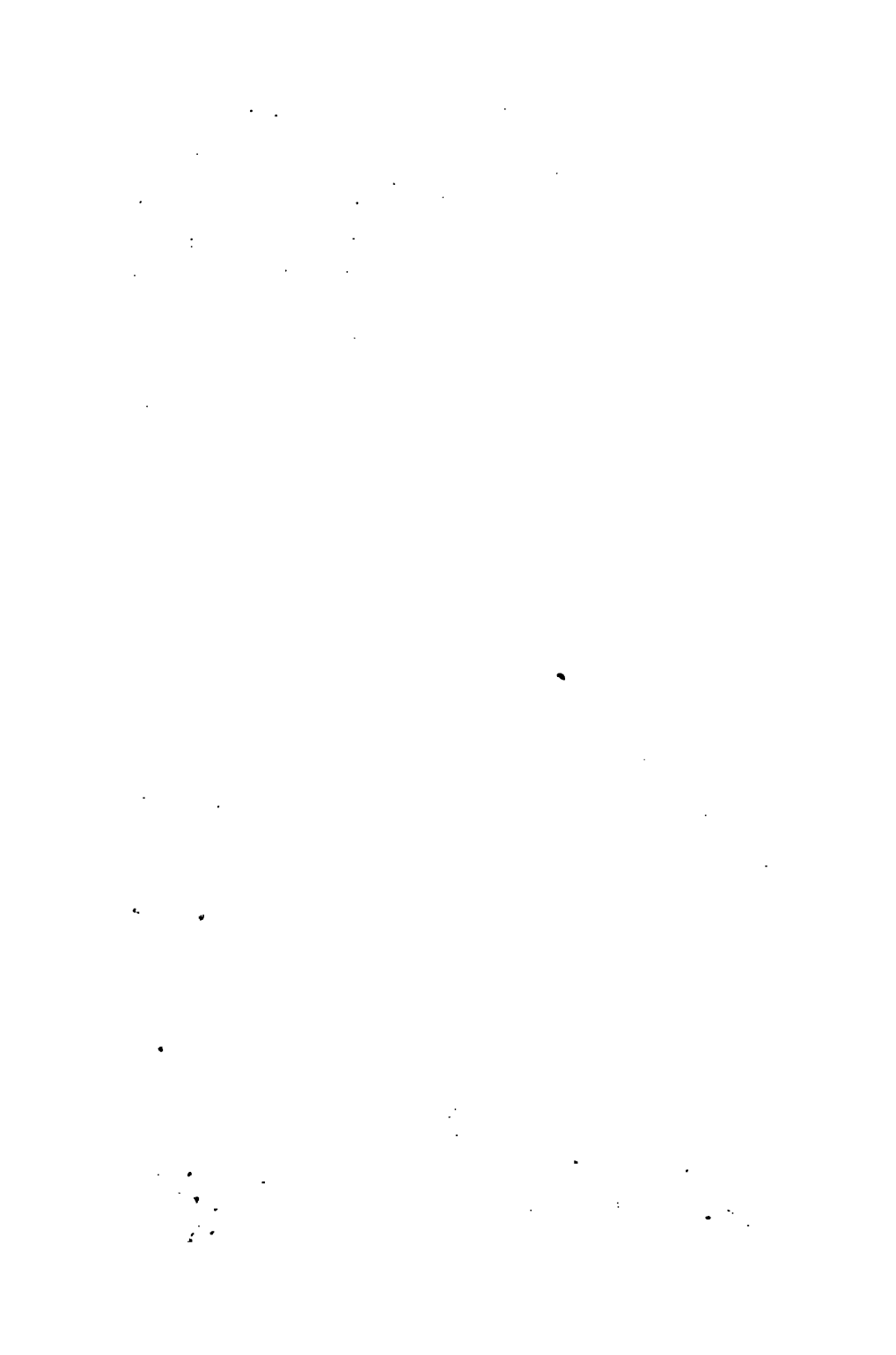
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